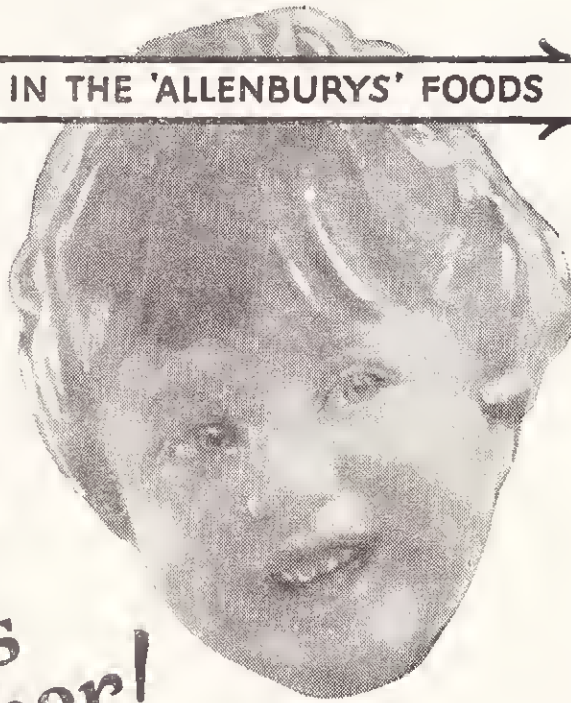


THE MERRY MAGAZINE



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THE MERRY MAGAZINE

No. 57.

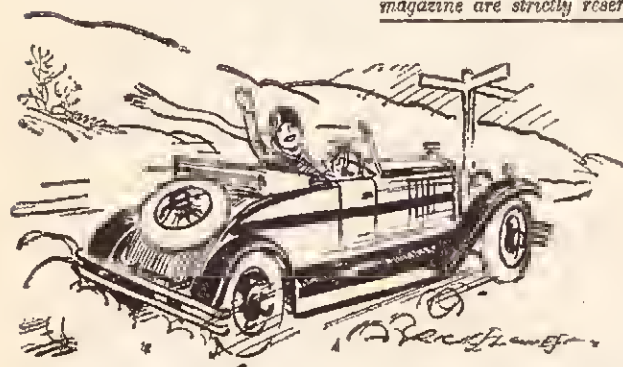
FOR MARCH, 1929

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Coloured Cover Design by P. HARDING

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*If the cap (or hat) fits— But it didn't. Whereby there was much laughter.
Dicky Starr and Hynes get together this month and make merry.*



By RICHARD STARR.

Illustrated by HYNES.

WILLIAM entered the picture-house rather hot and flustered. He found Emily just inside the swing doors leading to the balcony.

This was where she had said she would wait for him, and there she was according to plan. William couldn't see her, because he had just come from bright sunshine outside, and he could see nothing.

But he felt somebody catch hold of his arm rather roughly, and Emily's voice said: "So here you are."

Which meant, obviously, that Emily was annoyed again. She had been waiting a quarter of an hour, and Emily did not like waiting for William. She said it was undignified for a girl to wait for a man, though she would cheerfully wait two hours outside a shop when there was going to be a bargain sale. But William, of course, was not a bargain sale.

"I'm very sorry, dear," said William humbly, and a little out of breath. "Funny thing, I ran straight into the arms of old Crabtree. He was in my battery, you know, and I hadn't seen him since we had that reunion two years ago. I simply couldn't get away from him for a few minutes. He would keep talking about a screamingly funny thing that happened once when we all went to the divisional baths at Poperinghe. You see, we hadn't had a bath for——"

"Oh, do be quiet!" said Emily crossly.

A torch girl projected an electric beam of several kilowatts straight into William's best eye, and said:

"This way, please."

The girl went ahead, waving her torch about in a most disconcerting way. Emily followed. William only kept in the cortège by grasping Emily's coat at the back. And Emily did not like her coat grasped at the back. It annoyed her. She said:

"Oh, do leave me alone!" and knocked William's hand away quite sharply.

At the end of the front row of seats, the torchbearer deserted them.

"Come along," said Emily. "I'm not going to sit here. There's always a draught this side, and there's plenty of room farther along. Follow me."

William followed her as best he could. He seemed to be always following Emily. She was a born leader. William could not see her. He could not see a thing except the screen.

Being the afternoon performance there was a very small attendance, and the front row of the balcony was practically empty. So William did not have to walk over people's feet. He followed Emily by instinct, and presently, when he humped up against her knees, he knew that she had sat down. When she was annoyed Emily was very

sparing of words, so he did not expect her to say anything.

William said:

"Oh, here you are."

And sat down beside her.

William was never annoyed. He hated rows. He was always ready to admit himself in the wrong and take the first step towards an armistice. He was old-fashioned enough to believe that there was nothing like a few kisses to promote peace and forgiveness.

"Darling," he whispered as soon as he was in his seat, "I'm sorry, very sorry indeed. Don't let's quarrel. Let's make up and be pals."

He slid his arm round her waist and drew her towards him. He felt her stiffen, but overcame this reluctance by a little masculine strength. There were times when William believed in a mild version of the cave-man tactics. He believed that if you kissed a girl well enough and often enough she would eventually forgive you—though this hadn't always worked with Emily.

However, he kissed her three times in spite of her resistance. Once on the ear, once on the nose and once fair and square on the mouth. After which William released her and sat back, feeling that at least he had done his part.

He conveyed her hand

from her own lap to his, and held it prisoner, patting it reassuringly. That was one thing about Emily. She may have had her faults, but she had a very nice hand: a comforting sort of hand to hold in a picture-house.

"Do you mind telling me what you think you are doing?"

William stopped patting the hand, though he did not release it. It was trying to get away from him, but William held on. He had that sort of feeling that comes to us sometimes in dreams, when the solid ground melts under our feet, leaving us trying to stand on less than nothing. He felt he must hold on to something.

It was rather strange about this voice. It seemed to come from the next seat where

Emily was sitting. Yet it was not Emily's voice. It was a girl's voice, and a very nice voice indeed, but it did not belong to

Emily. It was altogether a weird effect.

William turned quite clammy. There must be a ventriloquist about, playing tricks. A low voice, little more than a whisper, with a husky sweetness that was thrilling. But not Emily's.

"I beg your pardon," said William cautiously, feeling his way. "I didn't quite get you."

The voice

came again, not more than six inches from his ear—on Emily's side.



"What have you got there?" asked Emily. "My hat," said William automatically. "Don't be ridiculous; your hat is on your head!"

"I said I should be glad if you would tell me what you think you are doing."

William became more clammy. Gradually a conviction was forcing itself upon him that there was something wrong somewhere.

"I'm afraid I don't understand," he said. "Who are you, please?"

"I don't know that that is any business of yours," said the voice, rather sharply.

William choked.

"B-but I thought you were Emily."

"I am not Emily," said the voice. "Can't you see that I am not?"

"I can't see a thing," confessed William.

"I have just come in from outside, and I never can see anything in a picture house until I have been inside at least five minutes."

"Well," said the voice, slightly mollified, "if Emily is the girl who was with you—that is, if she *was* with you?"

"She was—is."

"Well, you were walking about three yards behind her, so I didn't know. She went out, and you sat down beside me. And then you——"

"Do you mean to say," asked William, in a hushed voice, "that it was you I kissed?"

"It was."

"Well, I can't understand it. I've never done a thing like this before. And do you mean that this is your hand I'm holding?"

"It is, and I'd be glad to have it back when you've finished with it. I know you've only borrowed it, but——"

William dropped the comforting little hand as if it had bitten him. He lowered his voice to a whisper, because he had just felt a foot prod him in the small of the back—evidence that there were people sitting behind him.

"I'm very sorry about this. I mean, I hope you will believe that I did not do this intentionally."

"That's all right. There's no harm done if you didn't know what you were doing—that is, whom you were doing it to. But do you, when you take your young lady to the movies, grab her directly you get to your seat and kiss her?"

"This is the first time I've done it," said William. "But, you see, Emily and I had

been having a row. We have a good many rows, and I don't like rows. Can't bear them. I was trying to smooth things over. I thought she was just in front of me instead of sitting several yards ahead, and when I felt somebody sitting down, I thought it was Emily. So I sat down and kissed her."

"You mean you kissed me."

"I'm very sorry——"

"Don't worry. Worse things happen at sea. But didn't it strike you that though you can't see a thing, the people who have been here some time can?"

"It didn't strike me," returned William contritely. "But now that you point it out I realise that I have been a gorgeous idiot. I can only hope that you will forgive me."

"There's nothing much to forgive. As kisses they are hardly worth mentioning. It's rather a good job I didn't have a man sitting on the other side of me."

"That would have been very unfortunate," said William feelingly.

"Yes," returned the voice drily. "Can you see now?"

"I am just beginning to make out your outline. I can't see your face yet."

"Then perhaps you had better go before you do. You might be frightfully disappointed. And I don't suppose Emily will be any better pleased for being kept waiting again."

William felt that there was fundamental truth in this. He rose hurriedly and grabbed his hat, which he found he had been sitting on. Not that it mattered, being a soft felt, but he did not remember putting it on the seat.

"I want to say again how sorry I am——"

"Please don't. I know it was a mistake, and you haven't hurt me. Get on and find Emily. She must be somewhere at the end of this row. The longer you stay the worse it will be."

It was worse than anything William could have imagined. William's explanation of his second absence was received in frosty silence.

With a desire for peace, he concealed the active part of what had happened. This did not make his ease any better, because it

transpired that Emily Gibbs had actually seen.

She had been in the theatre a quarter of an hour, so her eyes were accustomed to the gloom. She had happened to look back to see where William was, just at the very moment when William had the strange girl well and truly in his arms and was extremely busy kissing her.

William's delayed explanation of his

"Did anybody complain about losing a hat?" asked William.



mishap, when he eventually presented it for consideration, did not go at all well with Emily. In fact she laughed, a hard, unpleasant sort of laugh.

"Is that the best story you can think of?" she said.

"Look here," said William, getting for once a little annoyed himself, "if I were

running two girls at the same time, do you think I would be fool enough to invite them both to the same picture house at the same time?"

"Yes," replied Emily. "You would be fool enough for anything."

To which, of course, there was no answer.

William sat by her side for an hour, and the frost showed no signs of breaking. The picture did not help. It was all about a man who deceived girls in a barefaced way. Emily

applauded when, in the last reel, he was overtaken by richly deserved retribution.

But not a word would she have to say to the miserable William, who was beginning to wonder what he was really getting out of being engaged to Emily. Her lapses into sweetness were becoming progressively rarer. Whereas the girl he had kissed by mistake—how delicious that low, husky, sweet voice had sounded! How reasonable, even generous, she had been over his fatuous blunder. Already the idea was being horn in William's brain that he must see her again. That is to say, he must see her for the first time; because he hadn't seen her at all yet. He refused to believe that her face could be anything but delightful.

Abruptly, after an hour of stony silence, Emily rose and went out. William followed meekly, hat in hand. When they arrived in the lighted vestibule, he went to put on his hat and found he couldn't.

"What have you got there?" demanded Emily icily.

"My hat," said William automatically.

"Don't be ridiculous. Your hat is on your head. You've got a girl's hat in your hands."

Sad to relate, this was only too true. William's hat was indeed on his head. It had been on his head all the time. The hat in his hands, which he had been nursing for the last hour, was a soft felt, but there its likeness to his own ended. It was, as Emily had truly stated, a girl's hat.

"Where did you get it?" demanded Emily.

"It must be that girl's hat," returned the stricken William.

"What girl?"

"The girl I—I sat down beside. You see, I sat on a hat which I thought was my own. I was a bit confused. When I left I took the hat with me, thinking it was my own."

They were now in the street. Emily looked vengefully at the battered little toque.

"Throw the thing away," she said.

"How can I throw it away?" returned William spiritedly. "It is not my property. I must go back and find the girl it belongs to."

To be honest, William was not feeling so

crestfallen as he looked. To go back to the girl with the husky sweet voice was the one thing he most desired. To speak to her again; to see her face. If he couldn't see her this time, he would wait until he could. Perhaps to get her name and address.

"Do you expect me to wait for you while you go back to that girl again?" asked Emily.

"No," said William. "But I am going back nevertheless. You would have me let this young lady go home bare-headed?"

"If you go back to that girl you can say good-bye to me."

William bowed, and said he was going. Emily turned her back on him, walked to the kerb and hailed a bus, which ignored her. William went back to the picture-house.

To avoid argument he bought another ticket and went straight to the middle row where he had left the girl with the seductive voice.

The girl was not there. The whole of the front row was empty. She had gone without her hat.

"Did anybody," asked William of the torch girl, "complain about losing a hat?"

The torch girl giggled.

"Complain—I should just think so. A lady came and bullied me as if I had taken it. *You've got it*—oh, my goodness! She said somebody had stolen it, and she would hold us responsible. She carried on, I can tell you."

"I took it by mistake," said William seriously. "I thought it was my own."

The girl found this hugely diverting.

"Well, you can leave it at the office if you like. Then if she comes back we can give it to her. It doesn't look worth much now. She said we hadn't heard the end of this yet."

"Did she leave her address?" asked William.

"Yes. Here it is."

"Good," said William. "The least I can do is to call on her and return her property, with an apology."

"Brave man," giggled the torch-girl. "I wouldn't care to be you."

William cared nothing for her amusement. He forgot Emily. He felt like a surf-board rider on the crest of the wave. This was his day. He could do nothing wrong. He had her address. He was going to see her again. A hundred to one chance had come home. If he hadn't picked up that hat by mistake, he would never have heard of her again. Now the ball was at his feet. Everything depended on how he played it.

The name was Sarah Gates. As a name for a girl William had never cared much for Sarah. Now there seemed an aura of distinction about it.

He took the trouble to go home. The occasion called for some pains over his appearance. He had a feeling that he was going to meet his fate; and when a man goes to meet his fate, he puts his best clothes on if he has any sense. William did, at any rate. He had a feeling that Emily Gibbs was not for him. For a long time he had wondered whether Emily's almost habitual peevishness would be likely to improve after marriage, and what married life would be if it did not.

In the early part of the evening William, neatly but not gaudily turned out, rang the bell of a house in his own suburb. The door was opened by a weary-looking maid.

William, who was carrying a paper bag, asked if he could speak to Miss Sarah Gates.

"You mean Mrs. Sarah Gates?"

William's heart missed a beat. He stared at the girl.

"No," he said firmly. "Miss Sarah Gates."



"Well, there isn't a Miss Sarah Gates—not here, at any rate."

"Did Mrs. Gates lose a hat at the pictures to-day?" asked William a trifle hoarsely.

"Oh!"—the girl caught sight of the paper bag—"you're the man who took it? Come in. The missis wants to see you."

William was shown into a small front room. Gone was his fine confidence. He was a broken man. The wave on which he had been riding so triumphantly had let him down. Blind luck had led him by the hand only to make a fool of him. He had found the girl with the beautiful voice, only to be told that she was a married woman.

The door opened. A woman of fifty summers, with a hard, nobbly face and a martial way of putting her feet down, stood before him, glaring at him as if he were a malefactor.

William stood up, dumb. He was like a man turned to stone. He trembled to think that he had actually put his arm round this terrible woman and kissed

"Then you are the girl I saw that day at the movies?"

"You didn't see me—you only kissed me."

her. Imagination boggled at the idea. It could not be.

"Are you Mrs. Sarah Gates?" he asked faintly.

"I am," returned the uncompromising female. "Do I understand that it was

you who took my hat this afternoon?"

"Entirely under a misapprehension," said William. "I thought it was my own."

"Stuff and nonsense. A likely tale. I've never heard of such a thing. How could you mistake a woman's hat for yours?"

"I was rather confused," explained William. "When I found I was sitting on a hat——"

"Do you mean to say you sat on my hat?"

She grabbed the paper bag and tore out the unfortunate hat, which in spite of William's efforts at renovation looked a somewhat rakish affair.

"Ruined!" she cried: "You've ruined it! That was practically a new hat! Now look at it! Look at it, I say! That hat cost a guinea——"

"I shall be pleased to pay for it," returned William.

He counted out two ten-shilling notes and a shilling on to the table. The lady was slightly mollified, but only slightly. She was worse than Emily—far worse. Yet in the darkness of the picture-house how reasonable and friendly she had sounded!

"I want to say again," added William firmly, "how sorry I am for what occurred this afternoon."

"So am I—very sorry."

"When I kissed you I had not the least idea——"

"Kissed me!"

The terrible woman seemed to dilate. Her eyes glazed, her nostrils quivered.

"How dare you say you kissed me?"

A little ray of hope stole into William's heart like balm.

"It was you I kissed, wasn't it?"

"I know what this is!" declared Mrs. Gates violently. "This is blackmail, that's what it is. This is a deep-laid plan because you think I am a lone and defenceless woman. But I am not. My husband shall hear this. You shall tell your infamous story to him!"

She flung the door open and marched out with martial tread. William hoped that Mr. Gates was at the far end of the garden or in the bath. He did not wait to find out. It

seemed to him at that moment that the story he had to tell was not a convincing one.

He slipped out of the room. The narrow hall was empty. A moment later he closed the front door behind him. Not till he was round the corner did he breathe freely again.

A terrible business altogether. But there was one bright spot. There was strong presumptive evidence that it was not Mrs. Gates he had kissed in the darkness of the balcony. That was some relief. But the girl of the low, sweet voice—how was he to find her now?

Emily returned her engagement-ring, and three weeks later William heard that she was going out with Mr. Purkess, a rather well-to-do widower. William hoped she would be happy. Mr. Purkess had a very fine car, and Emily had always seemed to regard it as a grievance that William could not afford a car.

Being honest with himself, William could not look upon it as a misfortune that he had lost Emily. He found indeed that life was brighter. Their temperaments had evidently clashed. Perhaps she would get on better with Purkess. He hoped so.

He did not forget the girl with the magnetic voice whom he had kissed in the dark. It was impossible to forget her. But she faded to the back of his mind, where she remained as a sweet, rather sad memory. It was impossible to be really grief-stricken over the loss of a girl he had never had and whose face he had never seen. And, after all, there was no definite proof that it was not Mrs. Gates he had kissed.

He went back after a time to his old ways. That is to say, he caught a later train to the City in the morning. Ever since his engagement to Emily he had caught an earlier train than necessary in order to go to the City with her.

And once more he saw the girl whom he used to see nearly every morning on this train. The pretty girl with the dark brown eyes and the glossy hair and the rather demure air of always minding her own business. It was nearly a year since he had last seen her.

Always William had been instinctively drawn to this girl. Not merely her prettiness. There was something companionable about

her. She seemed the sort of girl a man would feel comfortable with. She would understand him. He would not have to be always explaining why he did this and why that. He could not imagine her nagging.

There had never been any sign of recognition between them, though William had seen her nearly every morning for about two years. He was not the sort of man to serape casual acquaintance with a girl. Nor was this the girl to allow it. William had seen other fellows try it with her, and draw a complete blank.

Imagine, then, the surprise of William when she greeted him with a starry smile and a little nod of the head.

William was puzzled and delighted. Every morning after that she smiled, and William raised his hat. Then came the day when they found themselves straphanging side by side.

"Well," she said, "how did you get on with Emily?"

William stared. Gradually enlightenment came to him. The girl's eyes were full of laughter. Her hair had the rich gloss of the horse chestnut. Her lips were sweet and fresh and inviting. She was lovely.

All round them people devoured their morning papers, and other straphangers bumped them, unmindful that romance with shining face had come suddenly among them. William drew a long, deep breath.

"*You!*" he whispered, just loud enough for her to hear above the thunder of the train. "You are the girl I saw that day at the movies?"

"You didn't see me—you only kissed me."

"Well, I said I was sorry."

"I know you did. You said it several times."

"It was untrue. I am not sorry. I only wish I had kissed you more."

"Hush! I ought not to listen to this!"

"How is it that you know me?" asked William.

"You were the only one of us who was blind, you know. I could see your face quite well, and I recognised you."

"Did you know there was a hat on the seat next to yours that day?"

"Was there? It wasn't mine. I didn't take mine off."

"I sat on it."

"Gracious! There was a woman sitting behind. I suppose it was hers. If people put their hats on seats they haven't paid for, and forget them, serves them right if they get sat on. How did you get on with Emily?"

"I should like to tell you about that," said William. "How would it be if we were to meet to-night and have a cup of tea somewhere?"

"Oh, I don't know about that! You see, we are perfect strangers. We don't even know each other's names."

"That can easily be remedied. And I don't see how you can look upon a man who has kissed you three times as a stranger."

"Well, there's something in that, I suppose." She gave him a flashing smile. "How would six o'clock suit you, outside the Royal Exchange?"

THE END.

HER EYES.

I love Amanda for her tresses
So silken and so fair,
I love her for the way she dresses—
So neat and debonnaire.

I love her for her dainty nose
Uptilted, prim and chic,
I love her for the pretty rose
That blooms upon her cheek.

But since her "screw" was raised again
(A quite unlooked-for prize)
She seems annoyed when I maintain
I love her for *her rise!*

C. P. R.

One Crowded Hour

By
**CRAVEN
HILL**

Illustrated by
P. Hayward

THOMAS lived in Knightsbridge, a select enough quarter for any cat; a land flowing with milk and honey, hut more particularly with milk, especially around seven o'clock in the morning. At that golden hour, when the milkmen swarmed up like a besieging army past the Alhert Gate, you would be sure to find Thomas hanging round, tail waving hopefully aloft. It was the only thrill that crossed his humdrum life.

Now some cats—town-bred cats, mind you—can put up stoically enough with the enforced *ennui* of their colourless existence. Thomas, however, could not; may he he was too highly strung. Bored stiff with the unrelieved monotony of it all, the adventurous spirit of some far-back wild ancestor asserted itself, and—well——

The long autumn evening was drawing to its close. Outside, the roar of the Knightsbridge traffic died away, and the hurrying footsteps of passing pedestrians grew few and far between. In the luxurious, soft-lighted lounge of a big house facing Hyde Park only the ticking of a clock and the clicking of knitting-needles broke the silence.

Curled up in the lap of a big arm-chair lay Thomas, apparently asleep. But he was not asleep. Oh, dear, no! Just horribly bored, that was all. He opened one amber eye and blinked as his grey-haired mistress lay aside her knitting, rose, and, crossing to the door, went out.

A moment later Thomas rose, too, and stretched himself till his back vied with the Marble Arch in the gracefulness of its curve; then, the pupils of his eyes like ver-

tical slits set in yellow stone, his attention was attracted to the open window.

Outside, a passing bowler-hat, tilted rakishly upon its owner's head, drifted by on a level with the window-sill. That fair emblem of romance gave Thomas an idea. It seemed to beckon, to urge him into the great outdoors. He silently let himself down out of the chair.

A pause followed, while the walnut clock on the mantelpiece ticked hurriedly, as if anxious to get on and pass over an awkward moment. Then Thomas appeared on the window-ledge, edging himself with great care past a large bowl of dahlias; for Thomas, be it understood, never upset anything. It was, I should think, his one boast.

A minute later his broad, striped head poked itself out of the open window and remained still while he blinked his sleepy eyes and sniffed the cool evening air. Then followed his large body, and one noted that he looked well-nourished. But that was just his trouble; physically, Thomas was well-fed, but spiritually he was starved for adventure.

Opposite, the park, with its tall trees and shadowy shrubbery, seemed to beckon him with irresistible charm. Just then, from among the lower branches of those same trees, Thomas caught the baleful glare of two pale, luminous discs. They seemed to float in the very air, without head or body attached to them, and the eyes—for Thomas supposed them to be eyes—held in them an indescribable challenge. From across the road, Thomas met their cold stare. He had never seen such mysterious eyes

before; they shone in the dusk almost like his own.

Just then they vanished as if by magic, and so did Thomas. The mystery of those luminous orbs was too much for any cat with highly-strung nerves to stand. He just slipped quietly to the ground and stepped mincingly across the pavement to the road beyond.

Just as he was midway across, a solitary rider on horse-back came cantering down upon him. Thomas pulled up short, half-seared at this unexpected apparition. Anyone watching would have said that Thomas had better say what few prayers (if any) he knew, for the beast which loomed up suddenly out of the gloom looked as big as the Achilles statue beside him. In the nick of time, however, Thomas fled from under the clattering hoofs, and soon was safely on the opposite pavement.

Here more trouble awaited him, for against the railings was a young Cairn,



PHILIP
HAYWARD

Thomas stared back at the owl with that fixed stare of unspeakable hate common to his kind.

delicately investigating the possibilities of a derelict bone. At the approach of the cat, the dog lifted his head and snarled. But Thomas was a London cat, with all that that implies, and it took more than a scalliwag Cairn to shake his nerves.

Wherefore he leapt, lightly as thistledown, upon the dog's back, and stuck there as close as a burr, scratching and spitting luridly.

The next few seconds were quite crowded, and the Cairn had the time of his life. Even a kitten, you know, can make wonderful havoc of a dog's back when once it gets fixed there, and Thomas was a tougher proposition than any kitten. When that dog at last got his leave to go, he went rather sooner than at once, proclaiming his sorrows aloud to the world at large, so that his master, coming out at that moment from his front-door, heard him from afar off and swore.

As for Thomas, he turned about, all savage and hristling, and went, too. He went straight up to and through the railings, brought a filmy spider's web to sudden grief, and found himself at last on the soft, warm grass of Hyde Park.

As he went he turned and looked back once at the lighted windows of the house he had just left. A few moments before, in there among the shaded, exotic lights of the big room, Thomas had been just an ordinary domestic puss, *felis domesticus*—a harmless tabby. Now, out here in the gathering dark, among the night, he had become just—*cat*. The prowling, hunting beast that his wild forefathers had been.

Silent as a ghost, with head down and shoulders humped, trotting with the peculiar swinging, loose stride that he adopted when in spacious surroundings, he passed like a patch of floating mist right down the avenue of elms beside the Row. Once he slouched up to a couple on a seat beneath a tree, but finding that they took rather more interest in themselves than in him, he passed superciliously on, his nose in the air.

A little later a mouse shot out, all hot and hothered, from a clump of bushes beside the path. It must have been an absent-minded creature, for it quite failed to see the cat

standing in its path, and committed suicide *via* Thomas accordingly. This was life in the raw—hare and without frills on, life such as did not often come the way of a mere town cat, and it suited Thomas' æsthetic senses to a T.

For a minute or two he growled over it, and then, pretending that he had forgotten its very existence, he turned his back for a moment, as a cat will. When he turned again, lo! the mouse was no longer there. It had vanished as completely as if it had never been.

Thomas was a sensible cat; he was no believer in spooks, so he looked around; the mouse must be *somewhere*.

At that moment a voice close above him said suddenly and awefully: "Who're you?"

Startled, Thomas glanced up in the direction of the voice, and there, before him, seated on the topmost bar of the railings, was a bird. But no ordinary bird, for he was a giant among the feathered ones. Moreover—ah, the secret was out!—this was the owner of these dreadful "eycs-in-the-night" which he had seen from the window of the house across the road. What was more, a mouse—Thomas' mouse—hung limply from the owl's clutehing talons.

This was the limit. Thomas glared back at the owl with that fixed stare of unspeakable hate that lives in the eyes of all the cats when roused. And the owl returned the stare *ad lib* and with compound interest. Possession, he seemed to say, was nine points of the law, and the mouse was his mouse. Then, without waiting to handy words about it, he spread his dusky wings and flitted up into a neighbouring elm, in a hollow of which, where the first branch jutted out from the massive trunk, he had his nest. A safe retreat wherein he was wont to sleep all day with the distant roar of the Knightsbridge traffic drumming dully in his ears. There, not being at the moment over-hungry, he laid the mouse in his "larder," and went off forthwith to seek for further stores.

And Thomas? Ah, but Thomas' interest was roused, and when that happened, you never knew—it might lead to anything.

Thomas was curled up luxuriously in an arm-chair, apparently asleep. But he was not asleep ; just horribly bored.



Looking after the fugitive, he watched it disappear among the foliage of the elm, and in less than two seconds Thomas was well on his way up that elm, doing a little exploration work on his own account.

Presently he found the entrance to the owl's larder, popped his head cautiously over the edge, and looked inside. The place smelt like a dustbin, and small wonder ! There, before him, were rats, sparrows and starlings of various ages. And on the top of the heap was —his own mouse.

Thomas, too, looked upon possession as nine points of the law. Therefore he carefully retrieved his prize from the rubbish heap and returned, silent as the night itself, by the way he had come, till once more he stood upon the path beneath the tree. Then, being minded to carry his prize home with him to be devoured at leisure, he gripped it in his teeth, and glanced round furtively with a low, rumbling growl as a warning to all his foes.

He reached the railings at last, and was about to slip beneath when he heard the angry voice of "Eyes-in-the-night" and the quick snap of his beak, and, looking up, saw the owl flit silently past and away.

But Thomas didn't care two of the owl's hoots for *his* troubles. He had had one crowded hour of glorious life. He was content.

He slunk across the road like a shadow, leapt through the open window into the lounge of the big house, and there upon the hearth enjoyed the fruits of his labours. Then, having cleaned himself up and completed his toilet, he jumped into the big arm-chair and settled upon the cushions.

A moment later the door opened.

"The *darling* !" said a silvery feminine voice as his mistress entered the room with a saucer of milk. "I *do* believe you'd never stir your sleepy old bones unless I made you !"

Thomas rose lazily and made towards the saucer.

*Some things there are that cannot be bought, but
Chester found that he could get—*

Romance for Rent

By

GEORGE
WESTON
*Illustrated by—
E. Wech Ridout*

I.

IT was a dangerous place, that shop of Gedding's. From the avenue it looked like a reconstructed Elizabethan house; rather tall, to be sure, but authentic enough from the pavement. At one time a Canton shawl would hold the centre of the shop-window; at another a chinchilla wrap or a set of silken mysteries which seemed to draw the ladies as apple-blossom draws the bees. Thus attracted, a certain percentage buzzed inside, and could only escape by leaving behind them some of that golden honey without which the hives of industry would presently cease to exist.

A dangerous place, yes; a trap, if you like, but a trap which wouldn't have been successful without the gift of imagination and a fine disregard for the perils of the deep. In far-off Kyoto and Yokohama, in Shantung and along the shores of the Pearl River, in Calcutta and Madras, in Lyons and on both banks of the Seine, in Brussels and the Low Countries, in such widely-flung islands as Luzon and Madeira, patient workers toiled and spun so that Gedding's might be properly baited with beauty, so that no woman born of man might enter without feeling her heart beating faster and her pocket-book opening. A trap, if you like, or a world-wide web; and at the centre of the web sat old

John Gedding in his office on the mezzanine floor, looking at the card which his secretary had just given him.

"Chester Taylor," he read. "Who's he?"

"I think you asked him to call," she said. "Didn't he write you something about booklets and circular letters?"

"Oh, yes," said old John. "Send him in."

He leaned back in his chair, having long ago got over the trick of looking husy whenever a caller was expected; and there he sat, a fine old spider in the middle of the web which had been his life's spinning. He had once been red-headed, but time had partly cured that; and he had, no doubt, once been slender, but time had changed that, too. And there he sat, with shoulders so wide that a visitor seldom gave thought to the curve of his front, especially after looking into those quizzical blue eyes under their rusty lashes.

A young man entered; so young, indeed, that he had not yet outgrown his freckles. But he crossed the room with a grave and earnest step, as though his cargo were full of the noblest merchandise.

"Mr. Taylor," said old John, motioning him to the chair by the side of his desk, "what can I do for you?"

The caller sat down, saying:

"I'll show you, sir."

The net results of his work were four heavily corrected sheets of paper. Four sheets which Chester sourly tore up after reading them.



And while he unbuckled his attaché-case, the two men looked at each other across the years between them.

"Red-headed and freckled, like I was," thought old John; "and probably thinks he has the world by the tail, like I did."

The young man thought:

"A tough old turkey, but I think he's a good one. I'm glad I put on a clean shirt this morning. Darn these locks, anyway!"

He almost pulled the second one off—a touch of spirit by no means lost on the one who was watching him—and then from the open case before him the visitor drew a two-page circular.

"Mr. Gedding," he earnestly began, "we all seem to be born to do one thing well. You've done this." He made a motion indicating the encircling shop. "You know how good it is from the results you get from it. And I've done these." He waved the circulars. "And I know how good they are from the results we get from them. I was working in Northampton at the time. My first job. In the shoe department of Grain and Mitchell. And one rainy day I wrote this. Mr. Grain liked it. He had it printed in two pages of the telephone-book. The results were so good that we printed it in most trade directories, and that month our business in the shoe department more than tripled. I have a letter here from Mr. Grain which says so."

And then—and not till then—he handed the circular to old John. It was a simple little folder, entitled "A Regular Man Has an Awful Lot to Thank a Calf For." Old J. G. glanced it over, but gave close attention to the accompanying letter.

"A few weeks later," continued the earnest young man, "Mr. Grain called me to his office. 'Chester,' he said, 'I've been wondering if that circular of yours was a fluke. We've over-stocked ourselves with fishing-tackle. See if you can get out an advertisement that will move it.' That night I wrote him this one, 'A Line, a Hook, a Sweet, Cool Brook.' Inside a week we were ordering fresh tackle, and Mr. Grain wrote me this letter of appreciation and put me in charge of the firm's advertising."

Again old J. G. glanced at the circular, and again he bent his rusty brows over the letter which went with it.

"I worked there a year, and was so successful that I began to realise that this was the one special thing which I had been

born to do well. It was then that I began to dream of coming to London. I arrived here six weeks ago to-day, and here are the results to date."

This time old J. G. sat back in his chair as he examined the further exhibits in the case of young Chester Taylor v. The hard-boiled City of London.

"You're doing well," he grunted then.

"Yes, sir," said the other earnestly. "And so are those who are doing business with me. And now, Mr. Gedding, my terms are simple. I would like to write you an advertisement. If you don't like it when you see it, you owe me nothing. If you decide to use it and aren't pleased with the results, you still owe me nothing. But if you use it and are pleased with what it does for you, I then receive fifteen pounds—and an order for another ad."

Since laying down the last exhibits, Mr. Gedding had been studying his visitor more attentively—and whether it was the young man's freckles or his hair or his earnestness, rich old John G. seemed to see himself again when he was a poor young John G., and had come to this same city with not much else than an almost fanatical belief that some day he would be driving his own horses up and down Piccadilly.

"Have you had your lunch?" he suddenly asked.

"Not yet, sir," said Chester, his colour rising.

They went to a near-by club—and by the time they had reached dessert, the young man from Northampton was telling his great ambition. When he had acquired sufficient capital, he meant to establish a business of his own—a business that could be built up by folders and advertising until it was known throughout the world. "Like—like Gedding's, for instance," he concluded. "Raising my own child, if you know what I mean, sir; instead of raising other people's children."

The older man grinned—his thoughts again traversing fifty years.

"Nothing like raising your own," he nodded. "But go slow at first. I've seen



He watched her as she silently slipped a new sheet of paper into her machine. "No foolishness about this one," Chester thought.

many a promising young man go broke because of too much overhead expense."

This time it was Chester's turn to nod—only he did it more earnestly.

"That's one of two things I vowed to myself before I came to London—to keep

expenses down," he said. "The address on my letter-paper, I don't mind telling you now, is my boarding-house. And all my typewriting's done at a public stenographer's."

"That's the way to get along!" exclaimed old John G., looking back at the years when

he had gone without his lunch in order to inch ahead that much further. "But you say you vowed two things. What's the other?"

This time it was a wonder that Chester's colour didn't set his ears on fire.

"To keep away from the girls," he said, dropping his voice, but trying to look very serious indeed. "I noticed at school—and after I left school—that a fellow who chased a girl was never much good for anything else. They seem to take all a man's thoughts—all his spare time when he ought to be improving himself—all the money that he ought to be saving. And I may be wrong, but I can't see what they give for what they get. It seems like a one-sided game to me."

"That's the way to talk!" chuckled old John G., rising. "All right, son; let's get back to the office. I'm going to have you write me an advertisement—on the terms you said. Our silk stocking department's been falling back lately. Let's see if you can give it a boost."

They walked back to the store together—the earnest young man and the still beaming old one by his side.

"Of course you know they wear silk stockings," said the latter once.

"Oh, yes," said Chester. "In fact—er—I believe I know all the essential facts about them."

"That's good!" said old John G. heartily. "That's fine! Because in our business, you know, we must understand the ladies, or we wouldn't be able to please them."

Arrived at the store, he led Chester to a tall blonde, whose manner was that of a gracious young duchess who was doing this thing for a lark.

"Miss Dacher," he said, "this is Mr. Taylor, who is going to do some work for us. Will you please show him our line of silk stockings. And—er—give him any other assistance he requires."

II.

A DOZEN times Chester started his advertisement for Gedding's—and as many times he crumpled the paper and threw it across the room.

"No good—no good," he groaned to himself. And finally, in something like despair, "What's the matter with me to-day?"

For inspiration he turned to the successful circulars which he had written in the past, and there he presently made a discovery. All his bull's eyes had been scored on appeals to men. Shoes, fishing-tackle, gloves, a safety razor, a service station, shirts, income-tax accounts, wireless—these had been his best subjects.

And although he hadn't told this to Mr. Gedding, since coming to London he had done badly—once on a millinery announcement, and the second time on a folder which he had written for a hair-dressing firm.

He tried again—this time with a title: "A Woman Has An Awful Lot To Thank a Silk-Worm For."

"Toh!" he muttered, tearing it up. "That's taken from my first title. Good lord, have I come to the end of my rope already?"

Again he tried. "Silk, Satin, Muslin, Rags." "Silk Stockings, Nightingales, and Roses." "Imagine the World Without Them." And "Madam, Why Do You Wear Silk Stockings?"

"Ah, that's it," he told himself, frowning at this last question. "If I knew that, I could write something that would pull 'em into the shop. But do they wear 'em to draw attention to their legs? Or because they like smooth? Or because of the colours they can get? Or because they're the fashion? Or—or because they look rich? Darn it!" he added, almost growing indignant. "Why should a woman want to wear silk stockings any more than a man wants to wear silk socks? That's what I can't see."

It occurred to him vaguely that Miss Dacher might be able to tell him—that tall blonde who had taken such cool interest in showing him the long tops and the reinforced band for attaching the suspenders. Suspenders. There again was something. But instinctively he shied from Miss Dacher. She was entirely too decorative—too—too obviously clever.

Chester tried another title: "It Makes No

Difference Why You Wear Them"—and although at long last he achieved two hundred words, the result was vague—the reflection, in truth, of his own vague thoughts upon the subject."

"Oh, well," he told himself, with an earnest young frown. "I can't spend the rest of my life on this. Mr. Gedding may like it. And if he doesn't, I'll try again; that's all."

He put on his hat and went to the office of the public stenographers who did his type-writing. It was a busy office, with a row of cubicles along one side—staccato retreats which, from the noise, might have been incubators for young riveting hammers. Miss Kenyon generally did his work; and her door being open, he looked in. She gave him a business-like nod and he took the chair by her desk.

"Another circular," he said. "I'd better wait while you copy it. Some of the changes and corrections have been pretty well messed around."

He watched her as she silently slipped a new sheet of paper into her machine—an intent young girl, and almost as serious as himself. She read the first paragraph without a change of expression, and then her fingertips started dancing over the keys.

"No foolishness about this one," thought Chester. "I—I wonder if she knows anything about dress—the kind of thing one gets at Gedding's, for instance?"

Her outfit, he thought, looked smart enough. The jumper was silk—"or do they call them blouses?" he uncertainly asked himself—of a quiet design something like tapestry. He wasn't sure whether her skirt was blue silk or serge; but there was no doubt about her stockings. One of her feet was curved around the leg of her chair, showing a shapely shoe of black kid and a smoke-coloured silk stocking.

"She doesn't think much of it," he told himself, watching her face for the next few lines. "When she wrote the circular about the radio sets, she kept smiling and nodding. But she's only frowning at this. I wonder if I asked her. 'Miss Kenyon, I wish you'd

tell me something: Why do girls wear silk stockings?' But no; you've got to know a girl before you can ask her questions like that."

Which obviously pointed to danger—to one of the two things which he had vowed to avoid when he came to London.

"Unless it could be done on a business basis." He frowned to himself. "I think I've read somewhere that they have agencies in London where you can engage a girl for the evening—girls who talk well and dress well—and everything, on a strictly business basis. Now a girl like that might help at times—on a circular like this, for instance."

The girl at the desk, he thought, was frowning more than ever at the copy in front of her.

"You don't like it?" he suddenly asked.

"It doesn't seem as interesting as your last one," she said. "At least, it doesn't to me."

"Well, never mind; don't go on with it," he told her, coming to a quick decision. "It needs more work. Perhaps you can tell me something. Do you know any agency in London where I could engage a girl for the evening?" He told her the type of girl he wanted. "Everything to be absolutely business," he concluded; "only I want a girl who's bright and knows how to talk."

They looked at each other, and for the first time Chester noticed the length of her eyelashes and the cleft in her chin.

"Well——" She hesitated. "I'm not exactly silent, and sometimes at home they say I talk too much. But I wouldn't mind working overtime like that—on an absolutely business basis, as you say."

"What terms would you suggest?" he asked, his serious young look never more earnest.

"Well——" She hesitated again. "All this is new to me. But an average evening would be about—about three hours. So suppose we say six-and-eightpence an hour—or a pound for the evening."

Upon reflection, he accepted the legal rate; and they also agreed upon that evening for their first meeting.

"For I've got to get that circular done—and done right," Chester told himself, as he reached the street and looked at the hurrying, hungry city around him. "Because if I ever lose my confidence in this mob, I might as well pack my trunk and go back home."

III.

THEY met in the lobby of the Hotel Astoria by the side of the goldfish-pond.

"Hallo," said a gentle little voice in Chester's ear.

He arose—just a bit awkwardly if the truth be told—and at first he could hardly believe it.

"I wouldn't have known you," he said, shaking hands as he had seen the other men do. But not having heard them, he had to speak on his own. "This—this is a great pleasure," he said. "This—this is delightful."

And, indeed, she was giving him value for his money. She was dressed in an evening-frock of apple-green watered silk—one of those tight bodices with a flaring skirt. Her stockings and shoes were silver. And over her shoulder was a Japanese shawl in which cherry-blossoms fell from a tree.

"I hope you haven't been waiting long and aren't too hungry," she smiled.

"Oh, yes," he said, gratefully receiving the hint. "Er—have you any particular place where you would like to sit?"

She told him about the Rochambeau Roof, where there was a good show and an even better dinner. So they started for the Rochambeau; and when they reached the street, she said, "How lucky; here's a taxi waiting." At that, Chester felt a premonition of disaster; but the taxi fare was only a shilling, and a man can't mourn long for that.

"My brother's seen the show here," said Miss Kenyon. "He says it's awfully good, but you have to tip the waiter half-a-crown if you want a good seat."

Again Chester felt a vague chill of warning; but when, in exchange for his half-crown, they were led to a table marked "Reserved"—a table from which they had an unob-

structed view of the stage, the orchestra, and the dancing floor—and when the waiter brought a menu, and instead of beginning "Olives 2s. 6d, Celery 2s. 6d." it was headed "Special De Luxe Dinner, 4s. per plate. No Convert Charge," again the young man from Northampton inwardly rejoiced, as one who has been delivered from grave danger.

The show was just beginning—dancing girls and prancing girls—a girl with a book who truefully pretended to be taking Chester's telephone number, a girl with a violin and a contralto voice, a comic juggler who finally threw up his red rose and caught it in his pants pocket, a trick mule which made love to a party of middle-aged women and finally climbed up on their table and sent one old lady into hysterics, for reasons, perhaps, best known to herself and the mule.

"Miss Kenyon," said Chester, leaning over the table. "What is the general feminine attitude toward life to-day?"

"How do you mean?" she asked.

"Well, as you know, I'm doing that circular for Gedding's. I hope to do other work there. And I think it would help me if I knew the general feminine attitude toward life."

As you can probably see, this was vaguely leading to the more specific question: "Why do girls wear silk stockings?" But when Chester came to the end of his remarks, he found he was as far from the stockings as ever.

"I'm not sure yet that I understand," said she, "but if I know what you mean by 'feminine attitude,' I can tell you mine in three words. Anything but love!"

"Anything but love," he repeated, staring at her.

"Yes," she said. "I don't know whether I'm modern or not; but if that's being modern, I am. Love!" she scoffed. "It's a trap—a biological trap, Schermerhorn calls it. It's baited with moonlight, and flowers, and spring, and other miscellaneous idiocies of a sentimental nature, and if a girl is fool enough to fall for the bait, she's a prisoner the rest of her life. Playdon, though, doesn't call it a trap. He calls it a fever. You catch



The mule made love to a party of middle-aged women, and sent one into hysterics, for reasons perhaps best known to herself and the mule.

it like you catch any other illness. Only when you're delirious with scarlet fever, or typhoid, they watch you and take care of you. They don't let you sign an agreement giving away your life—your freedom. But when you have the love fever, that's just what you do; and when you get better—where are you?"

"In the soup," said Chester fervently. "Miss Kenyon, I'm awfully pleased I've met you. Of course, I haven't considered the question so much from the girl's point of view. But you've no idea how love plays the dickens with a man—a man. I mean, who wants to get on in the world. It throttles him, strangles him, takes his time, takes his money, ties him hand and foot. Not for me! And it isn't as if the girls were worth it. They aren't. With a few unimportant little differences, they're all the same—millions and millions of them, like—like germs in a test-tube. And why any sane man should deliberately pick out one of these germs, and—and inoculate himself with it, and—and go crazy—well, that's one of the mysteries of life that I've never been able to solve."

"No," said the germ across the table—rather shortly, if the truth he told. "Neither you nor anyone else. I can understand, of course, that once upon a time there was nothing else for a girl to do. But now there are so many opportunities for women. Look at Miss Gluck, for instance. She owns the place where I work. She has a chain of type-writing offices all through the business district, and makes four thousand a year—oh, easily! And look at Miss Tyser, with her tea-rooms; and Mrs. Masters (only she's a widow), with her shops for women; and Miss Condon, with her 'sweet shops'; and Mrs. Shotton (a widow again), the best-known interior decorator in London. And that's another reason I told you 'Anything but love.' As soon as I have a little more money saved, I'm going to start in business for myself. I'm not going to spend my life darning socks and peeling potatoes for a man who would probably be a darned sight better off if he had never met me!"

The excitement of the argument had brought new colour to her cheeks, an added bright-

ness to her eyes; and it didn't occur to Chester till later that this would have been a good time for him to have said, "Miss Kenyon, I wish you'd tell me something. Why do girls wear silk stockings?" Instead, he was thinking, "I couldn't have picked a better girl, either for looks or sense."

The show had come to an end, and the orchestra was playing a fox trot called "An Old-Fashioned Sleigh Ride For Me." The floor was darkened and snowflakes seemed to be flying through the air.

"Do you dance?" Miss Kenyon asked, as impersonally as she might have asked, "Do you like milk?"

"A little," said Chester, "but I'm not good at it."

"Neither am I," she told him. "But it's good exercise, and after sitting in an office all day—"

"Shall we try it?" he asked, seeing that she paused.

Fortunately the orchestra wasn't playing too fast; and, after all, you don't have to do much else but walk in a fox-trot.

"I thought you said you weren't good at it," said Miss Kenyon presently, looking up at him.

Which didn't exactly make Chester hate her.

"Now what shall we do?" he asked, after they had returned to their table for dessert. "Shall we go to a show? Or shall we stay here for an hour or so and talk, and—and exercise?"

"Have you tickets for a show?" she asked.

"Not yet."

"Then I think we'd better stay here," she said, marvelling at his inexperience. "The orchestra's good, and I've been sitting in the office so much lately."

As a matter of fact they stayed till ten o'clock, and before they left Chester had mastered a fancy little jig step at the corners—a fancy little jig step which seemed to add considerably to the beneficial effects of the exercise.

"Now, if you like," she said, as they left the huddling, "you can put me in a taxi,

and then you'll be free for the rest of the evening."

"No," said Chester. "I'm going to take you home. And besides," he naively added, "I've nothing else to do for the rest of the evening."

So they got in a taxi, she in her little corner and he in his, and on their way, breaking a rather awkward silence, he said:

"I wish you'd tell me something."

"Yes?" she murmured encouragingly enough.

"You know I'm writing that folder for Geddings." Even then he couldn't quite get the question out, so he compromised. "Is there—is there any difference in silk stockings?" he asked.

"I'll say there's a difference!" she exclaimed. "A silk worm would be surprised at some of the things which pass for silk stockings. Skimpy, sleazy things—you'd wonder they hold together as long as they do. Why, there's a shop——"

For the next ten blocks she told him some of the tricks which her shopping experience had taught her, and had hardly finished when the taxi stopped at a good-looking block of flats in the south-west.

"Well, night-night," she said. "Please don't get out."

"Just a moment," said Chester.

From his inside pocket he drew an envelope which had obviously been prepared and placed there in advance.

"What's this?" she asked.

"Your fee," he told her.

"My fee?"

"Your pound."

She almost ran across the sidewalk with it; and paying off the taxi as well, Chester walked thoughtfully down-town to his boarding-house.

"A Silk Worm Would Be Surprised," he muttered once. "There's my title, all right!"

IV.

OLD John Gedding seemed to like the title, too, sitting at his desk on the mezzanine floor, in the centre of the web which had been his life's spinning.

"Not so bad," he said, after he had read the copy. And with a shrewd hristling of his rusty brows: "I suppose Miss Dacher helped you?"

"No," said Chester. "Er—another young lady."

"Ah?" said old John. "So soon?"

"Oh, this was strictly business," Chester hurriedly told him. "A young lady—a young lady I hired for the evening."

He felt himself perspiring a little.

"Nothing like playing for safety," solemnly agreed the older man. "All right; we'll print a thousand of these and see what happens. Personally, I hope you get your fifteen pounds. And now, if you'd like to try another circular, on the same terms——"

"Yes, sir," said Chester in his best earnest manner.

"We've just received a shipment of French needlework—little intimate things, you know, that women wear."

Again Chester felt himself perspiring.

"I'm afraid, sir," he said, "that—that I'm hardly specialised enough in a line like that."

"But couldn't you study it—the same as you did this other subject?"

"I—I'm afraid not, sir. Not a line like that."

Old John said something which sounded like "Sssrrrump!" and loudly blew his nose.

"Well, let's see," he continued, considering. "Have you any—have you any objections to millinery?"

Chester also considered. As you may remember, he had tried one millinery folder, with unfortunate results. But perhaps, with the help of Miss Kenyon——

"No, sir," he said. "I've no objection to millinery."

"All right. Third floor. Ask for Miss Mooney, and I'll 'phone her you're coming. Tell her you want to see the new Paris model that just came in, and write about that."

The new model was simplicity itself—hardly more than an old-fashioned tam-o'-shanter without flare or button.

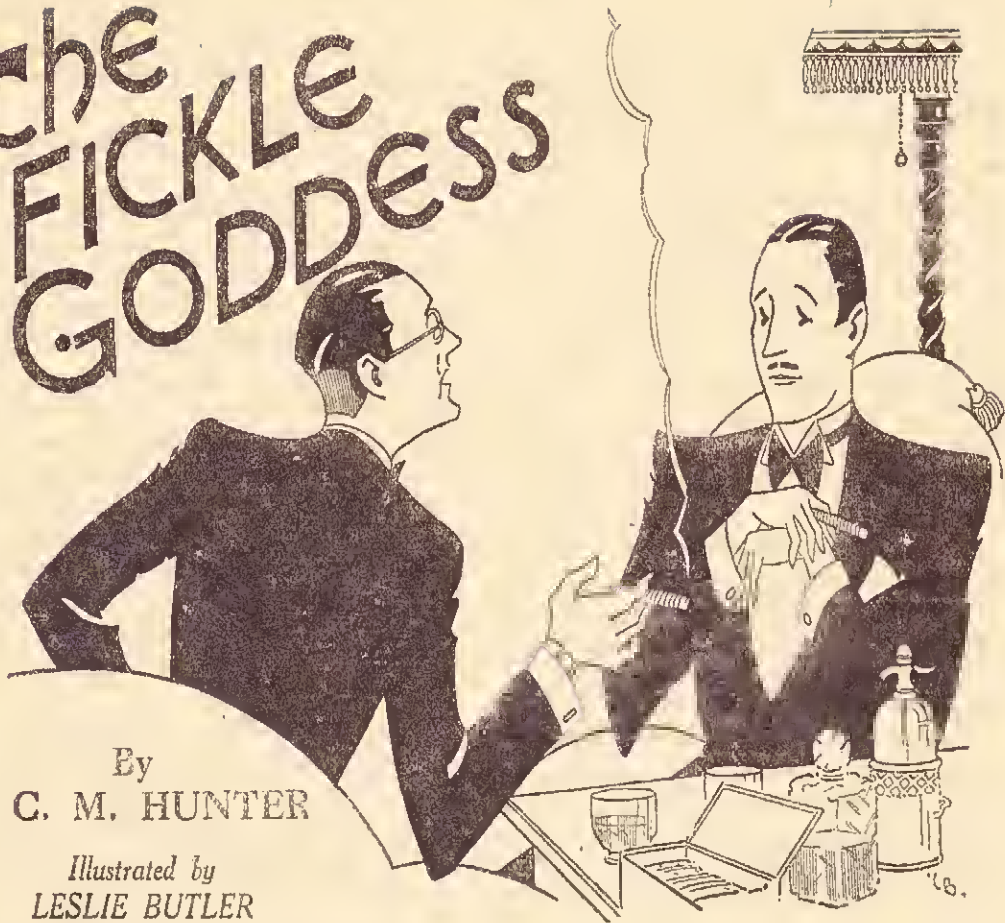
"I wonder if you'd mind if I borrowed

(Continued on page 89.)

THE FICKLE GODDESS

By
A. C. M. HUNTER

Illustrated by
LESLIE BUTLER



MY young American press-agent friend lit a cigar, and challenged me to argue, through his horn-rimmed glasses.

"All this punk," he said, "about movie stars fightin' their way up sure gets my goat. It ain't work as does it! Nossir! It's fellows like myself. Publicity—see?"

"Oh, surely not in every case?" I demurred timidly.

"Yessir! Every darned one!"

"But what about the really talented artists? Look at Mamie Vanlotta, for instance."

"Yeah!"—disgustedly. "Just look at her! Guess you won't find no moths parking thereabouts, kiddo!"

"You mean——"

"Suah! If it hadn't been for one of the cutest publicity stunts ever put over, li'l Mamie Vanlotta wouldn't never have got nowhere."

"You don't say so? Were you her agent?" He shook his head sadly.

"Nope. Oughter have been. Was a bit sweet ou li'l ol' Mamie, an'—but d'you meanter say you ain't never heard about it?"

"Nope! I mean no! I always thought——"

"Waal, you've got another think comin', sonny. I'm just gonna spill such a bibful of disillusionment over you, that you'll think you've been out in the wet for a week."

"In the first place, Mamie ain't no Italian count's disinherited daughter, like what she makes out. All the Italian she can say is 'Macaroni,' an' she didn't have to go to Naples to learn that, neither."

"Nossir! Vanlotta's downright small town Texas, all the way through."

"Mamie always had a hunch that she'd be famous one day. Readin' movie papers and what not. By the time she was twenty, fame was

the one thing Mamie wanted nothing else but.

"She therefore slid down the li'l ol' drain-pipe and let out for Noo York. The size of that burg sorta knocked her dizzy for a day or two, but after a breather she went round all the big theatre and kinema guys, asking them to give her a chance. They all pointed at the doorway to Fame, an' told her to shut it quietly as she went out.

"Mamie wasn't goin' to be pushed off the map like that, though.

"She got started at a third-rate eating joint, slingin' hash an' clam chowder—an' macaroni. This, she felt sure, was how you started climbin' the ladder of fame.

"Most of 'em are like that at first. They don't realise that there ain't enough time in one life to climb that ladder.

"Nossir! There ain't!

"You gotta fly up, else the roof garden'll sure be all crowded out before you arrive.

"Anyway, ol' Mamie cut off her hair an' most of her skirt, and generally made herself a good proposition to look at. Then she waited for bites, which there wasn't any.

"I met her and got rather musty just then. She said she'd marry me if I'd full off some publicity to get her into the movies.

"Waal, anyway, after a whole winter's work Mamie counted up what cash she'd saved and asked herself whether it was worth all the bother?

"Havin' replied in the negative that it wasn't, she decided to spend it all on a last fling at the movies. Never told me a word about it, neither, though I found out afterwards, when she landed me with the frozen mitt an' 'Good-bye for ever!'

"Her big idea was to get some really snappy photos took, and send them to the Big Guns personally.

"Didn't do it half, neither.

"Nossir! I'll tell the world she didn't!

"Ten dollars each they cost her, besides a bad cold through sittin' on a high studio stool with little on but a piece of ribbon here and there.

"She kinda reckoned that when the Hollywood crowd saw her figure, etc., they'd be after her like a mosquito after a tenderfoot in the tropics. Noo York had taught her that much, anyway.

"Waal, she went out to the studio to collect her photos one dark night, an' as it was well outa the real biz of the City, and she had a hundred dollars in her bag, Mamie was just a bit scared.

"Everything went all right, though, an' the photos sure pleased her down to the ground. The young feller what gave 'em to her was so taken up with them that she had to ask him twice to hand 'em over. When he tried to get fresh, Mamie just shoved the hundred dollars at him, an' walked out as though he was an unpleasant smell.



Sitting on a high stool, with little on but a piece of ribbon here and there.

"Poor h'l Mamie was hurryin' down the street like anything when, all of a sudden, two men came rushin' out of a house just beside her.

"They stopped on the side-walk an' faced one another.

"Next thing Mamie knew was a couple of bangs, an' the two guys lyin' shot, almost at her feet.

"She nearly threw a faint to make it a trio, only the big idea hit her first.

"There was nobody in sight yet. Revolver shots ain't so uncommon as all that in Noo York.

"Out came her waitress's pencil, an' two of the photos.

"On one she scribbled: 'Your Mamie,' and on the other, 'Your little Sweetie.'

"Then she dropped 'em careless-like, around the tragedy, and ran for it along a dark avenue, before the first cop arrived.

"Next mornin' they traced her, an' all the

kinema an' theatre nabobs was fightin' like wild cats round her door. Mamie Vanlotta was made."

He threw away his cigar and sighed wearily.

"But how——"

"Oh, you poor boob! Can't you get it? Why, every mornin' paper in Noo York had ferreted her out and was breakin' its neck to give her millions of dollars worth of free publicity. Big head-line stuff:.

'FATAL DUEL!

'TWO STRINGS TO HER BOW!'

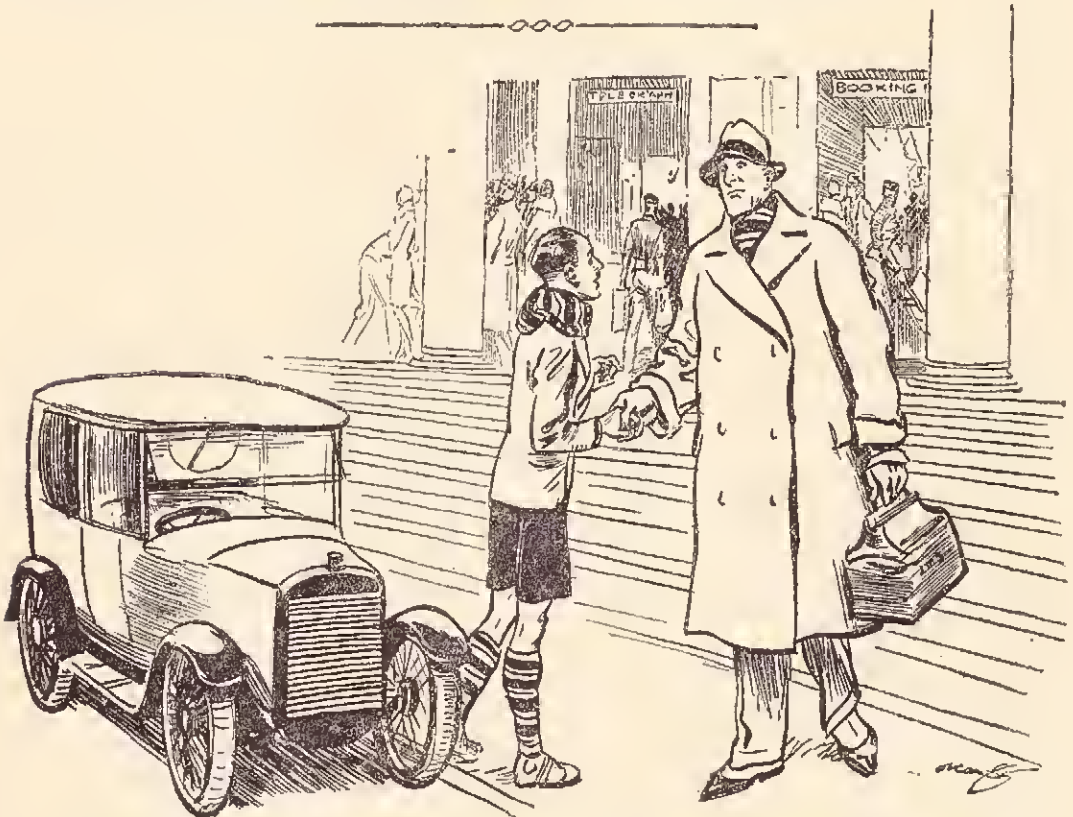
"That sort of punk!

"They all printed eopics of the very daring photos found beside the duel.

"Why, goshdarn my sister's socks, it was the smartest bit of publieity ever put over anywhere.

"And" — mournfully — "I never even thought about the dodge."

THE END.



"Hallo, old chap—not changed? Never mind, you can change in the car on the way down to the field."

ON THE NINE-THIRTY

By EDWARD TAYLOR

WHEN the tall, thin man in the grey suit, sitting reading in the opposite seat, made his third expressive grunt, I lowered my paper and raised my eyes.

"I see you are reading John Tappleton's 'Flames of Desire,'" I ventured. "How do you like it?"

The book descended a little, revealing a sharp hatchet face, wearing large horn rims, and surmounted by a thick, greying head of hair brushed back from the forehead. The man looked intently at me for a moment.

"Have you read it?" he asked, at length, in a deep grating voice.

"I have," I answered readily.

He thrust his head forward, fairly boring me with his deep set eyes.

"And how do *you* like it?" he queried sharply.

I laughed a little nervously at his abrupt manner.

"Oh! I think it's not at all bad—in fact it's jolly good." I said.

He gazed at me long and intensely, his lips set in a thin, hard line. Then he leaned forward, and prodded at my knee with a bony forefinger.

"You do, do you? You think that," he growled. "Well, let me tell you young man, that I think your taste in literature and fiction is atrocious, and about on a par with John Tappleton's ideas of writing it. For sheer unmitigated balderdash, John Tappleton's 'Flames of Desire,' to use a vulgarism, takes the cake, the biscuit, and the whole dashed bakery."

I gaped at him in astonishment.

"Of all the silly, sloshy muck that has ever been foisted on an innocent, unsuspecting and long-suffering public, 'Flames of Desire' stands supreme. It is absolute tripe—and

rotten tripe at that. John Tappleton's ability at writing is about equal to a British heavy-weight's at boxing. 'Flames of Desire'! Bah! The man who wrote it ought to be in the 'Flames of Hades.' His English would disgrace a schoolboy; his love episodes would bring tears to the eyes of a snake; his adventurous passages would bore a brick wall. Grrrr! I tell you frankly sir, I haven't words to express myself when I think of John Tappleton and his 'Flames of Desire.' It amounts almost to criminality to sell such stuff; and if there is a bigger fool, idiot, and nincompoop alive to-day than John Tappleton it is his publisher, and a bookseller who can offer his work for sale to a deluded set of mugs who are unfortunate enough to buy it, ought to be in gaol."

He got to his feet as the train pulled up, slipping the book into his pocket.

"But—still—you evidently find the volume good enough to keep," I managed to blurt out.

He turned his head, his fingers on the door-handle, and glared at me, causing me to shrink nervously into the corner.

"And why am I keeping it?" he snapped.

"Because, having in a weak moment, and when I was in too big a hurry to make a careful selection, paid two good shillings for—*this*"—he tapped his pocket with the tips of his distended fingers as if it contained something horribly loathsome—"which is not worth as many halfpence, I intend, at least to get some value out of it. I shall take it home, and use it, leaf by leaf, to make spills with which to light my pipe."

He got out, and I followed him on to the platform, and stumbled towards the exit feeling stunned and dazed, my mind a chaotic whirl of distracting emotions.

"*I am John Tappleton!*"

THE MERRY-GO-ROUND

Films and Stars of the Month
as seen by MEL and G.M.B.

"IN my young days," said the producer, as he waved the bathing beauties into line before the camera, "it wuz the *boys* we used ter call strip-lings." And then the chief electrician pulled the old one about Mr. Sennett's young ladies being like New York City because they were built with out skirts, so the producer stunned him with his megaphone. And the great relentless cameras started their mighty song and the beauty-canning factory went on, ever on, with its work.

Such is life in the great West—such is a slice of the said life cut from the tenderest portion of Hollywood and served up hot to the thunderous, ravening, printing presses that eat the intellects of strong men and fling the mangled results to a palpitating public. (Exclusive. Music rights reserved.) It was after seeing "The President," featuring the inimitable and unpronounceable Mr. Mosjukine, that we sort of came over all virile



Ivan Mosjukine, "The President."

and impassioned—as above. We took Mel with us, and he was quite swep' away, too—so much so that he afterward hailed a taxi in Wardour Street with a gesture that had in it all the magnificence of Benito Mussolini opening a paper-hanger's exhibition with the First Slap.

So you will readily understand that "The President" is a strong rousing piece of work and not a tame eat drawing-room drama.

As a matter of fact, in our humble opinion, it is the very best thing that the good Ivan has done yet. Certainly there is none of the glitter and magnificence of "The Prince of Adventurers" and "Michael Strogoff," the two successes that made his film name.

In place of this there is an unexpected, almost fantastic streak of humour running through it that links up the more dramatic sequences, and thereby throws them into sharp relief. And it is in this humour that Ivan shows himself to be an actor—with a big

"A." Almost any other star would have lost the onlooker's sympathy as a serious character in the later parts of the show by reason of the almost slap-stick comedy at the beginning. The story traces the rise of a lazy, care-free South American tramp to the proud position of President of his special little Republic. It is a story of amusing improbabilities that Ivan by his queer genius has made convincing and real. It is the story of mighty crowds, of election fevers, of frenzied oratory—and, inevitably, of love. Chico Torro, the tattered wanderer, loves the Countess Valdez from afar. And, of course, in the end he marries her. Well, as has been said, Ivan holds the whole thing together and absurdity fades like frost before the sunshine of his talent. The thing goes, and if you take our advice you'll go, too, and see the film when it comes your way, which will be some time this month.

Mr. Mosjukine, by the way, was born—you guessed dead right!—in Russia, at Penza, 26/9/'89 to be exact. He took up Law first of all, but a magistrate got a ricked tonsil in trying to call him by his surname, so Ivan went on the fillums. So we've heard, anyway. By stages he wended

his way to Hollywood, and we're sorry about the pun. His first film was "Surrender," and now he has signed a contract with the great Ufa company to make pictures in Germany. What's more, we wish him luck, for 'twould be a far, far better thing for the screen if there were more people like Ivan the Magnificent to cast their shadows before the world.



Mabel Poulton.

It was in 1927 that the Alhambra Theatre, London, suffered a great loss. A little fair-haired, blue-eyed typist had been working there happily enough until the big Griffith film "Broken Blossoms" was booked, and a stage prologue arranged. Someone was wanted to "double" for Lillian Gish in the show, and the little typist was chosen for the job. But (and here the plot thickens) George Pearson was there, and George Pearson stared at the stage and emitted the word "Gosh!" Now when you get a cinema magnate looking at a beautiful girl and emitting guttural noises, you can bet your uttermost farthing that pretty soon fair fingers will be guiding a pen along the dotted line, and pretty eyes will be surrounded by bright green grease-paint and directed full at an expensive lens. And thereafter

the cinema magnate will smile benignly and offer his bank-manager a cigar.

Which is how it all happened. The little typist was offered a part in the Pearson film "Nothing Ever Matters," featuring Betty Balfour. Then she was roped into "The Glad Eye," and subsequently starred as "Tessa" in Margaret Kennedy's uncannily beautiful "Constant Nymph." So the Alhambra lost the prettiest typist it had ever had, and the British film industry gained a beautiful actress. Whereat the B.F.I. above-mentioned, waved its hands palm upwards and lustily hisped three cheers for George Pearson, Esq.

You see, the typist was Mabel Poulton.

In the words of Omar Khayyám—or was it Winston?—"She's the fondest girl we're of." Apart from her quaint beauty, she has a whimsical sweetness of expression that sets her far removed from the wax-doll stiffness of many a famous Hollywood beauty. In the "Constant Nymph" this was so apparent that she made the film character of "Tessa" every bit as much an artistic achievement as Edna Best's interpretation of the part on the stage. There was a haunting sweetness, a rare beauty, and a highly imaginative quality about her performance that one does not often find in these days of megaphone-made talent. And now she is set to play the part of a fluffy, flighty "vamp." Well, well—in justice it must be said that parts like "Tessa" don't happen along every

day of the week, and films have just got to be made. Else what will pay for the director's eavaire and coronas? The film, too, in which Mabel vamps her sprightly way is excellent of its type—but, oh dear!

Our exquisite "Tessa" in a hilarious jumping-cracker comedy! The child of a Tyrolese mountain day-dream brought down

to earth as a comedienne! So much for the poetic corner of our mind which we now remove, place on the floor, and jump upon with both feet. All the same, it's a funny thing but we've laughed ourselves almost as much in love with Mabel, the "vamp" of "Virginia's Husband," as with the adored "Tessa"—which

is both a tribute to Mabel and the film itself. You see, she just can't help being the sweetest thing that ever happened in whatever part she plays.

"Virginia's Husband" was adapted from Mrs. Kilpatrick's highly successful stageplay. It concerns a young and beautiful man-hater who has to pretend to be married in order to keep the allowance made her on certain conditions by her aunt—amusingly played by Marie Ault. And

naturally enough uproarious comedy follows, finishing with Virginia and her temporary husband deciding to make a reality of their pretence. All of which is brought about by the machinations of the pretty little "vamp."



Dolores Costello.

Pat Aberne and Lilian Oldland keep the fun going as the "husband" and "wife" and Ena Grossmith as a little parlour-maid walks away with a good share of the laughs—which are many.

The direction by Harry Hughes for Archibald Nettlefold is up to the best British standards, and there is a sequence in a night-club which is unusually original. "The Café Clink" is designed with

pseudo stone walls, and barred windows. The waiters wear regulation knickerbocker suits, decorated with broad arrows and the menu ranges from "Horrid d'œuvres" and "Thick or clear skilly" to "Peach Portland" and "Café Nark." As a chief warder the maître d'hôtel parades the establishment wearing a heuign expression not usually connected with his part.

Quite good fun indeed, and well worth seeing. If this sort of thing goes on, the hosiery of the American Industry will be in need of a hitch.

New York, the giant of American cities, has probably suffered more from growing pains than any of the other lusty children of the federation—growing pains brought on by gunmen, police "graft," and a shifting population comprising every undesirable alien from Chinese to Croat.

Old timers, indeed, can remember the days when the 19th police precinct—the district west of Fifth Avenue and below 34th Street—was mostly composed of dancing and gambling halls so notorious that it is difficult in these more ordered times to believe they existed as they did. That was until Captain Alexan-



Monty Blue and
Betty Bronson.

der Williams took charge of "The 19th," to get busy and clean things up, and he knew that in doing so he veritably took his life in his hands.

"Well, captain," said one of the department, having visions of furtive gunmen shooting from dark doorways—"well, sir, I guess you've got one very nice berth in this job."

"That's so," returned Williams, with a grin. "I sure have the Tenderloin." And the colloquialism that he used formed the christening of that special district of New York. For "Tenderloin" it thereafter became, and "Tenderloin" it is to-day.

So now you'll know just what its all about when you go along to see Dolores Costello's crook-drama of that name which

is in general release this month.

The film centres round the undercurrent of warring gangsters that incessantly flows beneath the effervescence and sparkie of "Tenderloin's" cabarets and night clubs. Dolores the lovely as Rose Shannon of Kelly's café gets one of the finest emotional parts she has had yet. She is in love with an apparently honest youth who is really one of a gang of the choicest plug-uglies who ever yegged a sate.

Through her love for the boy she gets involved with the gang herself, whereupon the cops gather round and talk to poor plucky little Rose, the dancer, in such a manner that you want to jump up and "set about" the lot.

This, as a matter of fact, is the keynote of the whole thing—Reality. The crook stuff, the backstage business in the cabaret and the "third degree" inquisition by the police, are so well done as to make even the most blasé of audiences sit up and take notice. And as for Dolores—what adjectives can one gather together to do her justice? Sweet, lovely, appealing, graceful; take all the nice ones you know and arrange them as you will.

The task of putting the charm of Dolores on paper is beyond us, anyway. All of which is not surprising when one looks at her family history. She is the daughter of Maurice Costello, who was one of the first and handsomest stars way back in the old days when Charlie Chaplin was an unknown extra. She was born in 1905, at Pittsburgh, and her golden hair and glorious blue eyes soon got her into pictures, amongst which "Old San Francisco" and "Glorious Betsy" were her best.

"Brass Knuckles" is a good show, if a trifle sentimental; but whatever its merits or faults it is worthy of honourable mention because of its hero and heroine. Monty Blue and Betty Bronson are two of the most interesting folk in film-land, each with a record of having done some of the best work that the screen has ever seen.

Monty, you will remember, was the young doctor in Sinclair Lewis's brilliant "Main Street," and Betty achieved immortality as "Peter Pan." Each, of course, has played in many other pictures, although Betty was rather lost sight of for a while because it was decided that she had "It," and she was cast in rather daring parts, which she refused to perform. Whereupon, we are told, she incurred the wrath of high Moviedom, which hit back by leaving Betty severely alone.

However, the public wouldn't do as nice obedient public should, and forget all about her when told to, and they rose upon their

hind legs and squealed for her return. So high Moviedom had to masticate a generous chunk of humble pie and send Betty a studio call—which is a fine tribute to Betty and the public at the same time.

In "Brass Knuckles" Betty has a part with which she does wonders all things considered. It is another crook show about reforming gaol-birds and paternal love and mighty fists, and Monty and Betty carry the whole thing along with their usual consummate skill. Indeed, it is a show worth seeing, but we are still waiting for somebody to write a scenario that will give these two a chance to show the real depths of unusual and imaginative talent that they possess.

Films worth looking out for this month:

"The Red Dancer of Moscow" (Fox). A big evening for Dolores Del Rio fans—and a good sound, all-round show.

Quality Street (J.M.G.). Marion Davies in Sir James Barrie's masterpiece. Don't miss it.

"Wings" (F.L.). Clara Bow, Charles Rogers, and Richard Arlen in the finest flying film ever produced. Astounding and brilliant camera work. The show of the month.

"Mr. Wu" (J.M.G.). Lon Chaney and Renée Adoree in the film version of the famous Chinese stage play.

"Moulin Rouge" (Wardour). Olga Tschechowa in Montmartre drama.

"Anybody Here Seen Kelly" (European). Excellent work by Tom Moore and Bessie Love.

"The Big Killing" (F.L.). Wally Beery and Raymond Hatton in further top-notch team work. Don't go if you hate laughing.

"A South Sea Bubble" (W. and F.). Ivor Novello in a British film for which he grew a moustache. Steady girls! Don't give way.

"Freedom of the Press" (European). Lewis Stone—who is doing great things these days—in a rip-roaring newspaper story. Good Stuff.

"The Latest from Paris" (J.M.G.). Norma Shearer—and need we say more? So long as Norma's sweetness decorates a fillum, what does the fillum matter? Still this is a good 'un.

THE END.

A PECK OF MARCH DUST



By **STEPHEN PROCTER**

Illustrated by E. HUBBARD

THERE was nothing peculiar, after all, in Simon Percival's refusal at the age of forty-three to look upon himself as middle-aged. That sinister milestone is like the House in Alice-through-the-Looking-Glass—the nearer you get to it, the further away it seems. And anyway, whether because he had remained single, or because he had always been able to do himself rather well, or because his sister Winifred (herself unmarried) made

such an excellent housekeeper, the years had dealt lightly enough with him, and his heart could still respond to the annual call of Spring.

There were times indeed when he felt that comfort, the menu, and his forty winks were the only things that made life worth living; but there were also times when moonlight meant more than a Martini, when his skin rejoiced at the tingle of March winds, and his

eye lit up at the sight of a pretty girl. A dangerous age, it will be granted, especially since there were still times when pretty girls looked at him very much as they had done in the days gone by!

To-night, for instance. Dining with the Mainwarings, he had found himself next to pretty little Rhoda Mansell, who was staying with his hostess. He scarcely knew her again: she had shot up in a day from a school-girl to a young woman, and it seemed that her taste in men had improved as well!

That young spark Archie Mainwaring, sitting on her other side, had been left altogether out in the cold, for all his sheep's eyes! Evidently Rhoda liked intelligent conversation with a man of sense and ripe experience better than the babblings of a callow boy.

"Tell me," she said,—"you seem to know everything!"

"Well—hardly!" he laughed, realising he was being buttered, but enjoying it the more for the bitter sneer that curled young Archie's lips.

"It's so interesting to meet a real man-of-the-world sometimes!" she murmured as she rose at the end of the meal.

Afterwards somehow he found himself sitting by her side once more on the drawing-room couch, looking over an album of holiday snapshots. Some of the snaps were rather small, requiring close scrutiny. The scent of her hair was like the subtle odours of awakeing Spring.

Suddenly something inside him burst into flame. A touch of her little finger against his own, a quick side-long and upward glance of her big brown eyes—and all at once her hair, golden as sunlit corn, her soft sweet eyes, her flowing slender shape became for him the most intoxicating thing on earth!

He did not think he had it in him! The years dropped away like melting snow, the blood coursed through his veins like sparkling champagne, he squeezed the girl's hand at parting as he had not squeezed for fifteen years. Rhoda Mansell, child though she was, had taken his heart by storm, and it was an uncommonly pleasant sensation!

There was something a little maternal in

his sister's smile as she watched him, the smile of the Eternal Woman indulging the Eternal Boy. Winnie was a good sort. They could not have lived together all these years if she had been the critical, interfering type of sister.

"You seemed in good spirits to-night, Simon!" she observed on the way home.

"Frisky as a two-year-old!" he laughed joyously.

"Then you're glad you came, after all?"

It had taken some persuasion to draw him from the warm fireside of home, with its comfortable arm-chair so exactly moulded to his shape, its smoker's table, and the new novel from Mudie's.

"Rather!" was the boyish reply, as he tapped a cigarette to hide the dancing of his eyes.

"Rhoda's improved in looks," observed Winifred. "From what I remember of her at school. Of course, she was only in the kindergarten when I left."

"Really?" said Simon, lighting his cigarette. "By the way, I've promised to take her to the Point-to-Point to-morrow—the Minnel Hunt, y'know. She's never seen one. Care to come along?"

Winifred shook her head.

"Not in my line, I'm afraid," she laughed. "And, anyway, I've some people coming to tea. Shall you be back for dinner?"

"Oh, yes," he said hastily. "Yes; back for dinner!"

"Then you'd better bring Rhoda with you. I should like a chat with her about the old school."

She was a topping sister, was Winifred! No one like her for tact! Since she had come to look after him years ago, all had been peace and joy—the cooking sublime, everything about the house always tip-top! A fine woman, too, decorative in her way, with a flair for dress which always made him proud to be seen about with her. And brainy, by Jove, when a man wanted a bit of sound advice, or a good stimulating talk about the things that matter.

"Thanks, old girl, I will!" he said heartily.

The morrow turned out to be just such a clear crisp day as the Minnel Hunt could have desired, with a fresh wind blowing and a cold sun glittering above. A man could do without his afternoon nap on a day like this, especially when one had a date with a girl like Rhoda! He had not been so excited about anything for ages!

The years had dropped from him in the most wonderful way since last night. He was amazed at the thrill that ran through him as he stopped his two-seater outside the Mainwarings' gate, gave a couple of hoots on his horn, and saw the girl herself waving from the window.

Young Archie preceded her down the steps, held open the gate, and attempted to help her into the car. But she had eyes only for Simon. It was obvious that there had been no mistake about the *rapprochement* of yesterday: the melody was to continue from where it had left off.

"What a lovely little car!" she exclaimed at once, pausing to admire before jumping in, "Is she fast?"

"I've never got more than sixty out of her," confessed the proud owner.

"Goodness! I should hope not!" she gasped.

"Rats!" growled Archie. "You've done more than that on my pillion, without turning a hair!"

But nobody seemed to hear him.

"Jump in!" said Simon.

So she nestled at his side, this radiant vision in brown furs and the most fascinating of scarlet hats, and off they went.

Simon had been a little nervous as to his powers of entertaining so bright and youthful a companion, when it came to the point. But it was easy as pie! The girl was a veritable inspiration. Without effort on his part, the prettiest little gossamer compliments and shafts of badinage bubbled from his lips!

He had never been much of a hand at this light and airy trifling, but now his tongue was miraculously loosed. Some of the things he found himself saying were so good that he made a mental note of them, so that they

could be repeated for Winifred's—but no! That was one of the many habits he would have to get out of!

It was a pity, for Winifred would have seen the point so quickly and responsively, whereas he was a little bit doubtful whether Rhoda always did, in spite of her charming smiles and flashing teeth.

Yet she had a humour of her own, too—a sparkling overflow of spirits that raised a laugh out of the sheer irreflective joy of living, and carried him back—oh, years!

He had felt a little sinking of the heart when he realised that young Archie Mainwaring had followed on his motor-bicycle with another young fellow on his pillion. But he need not have worried. The more Archie edged alongside, and strove to catch her eye, the more engrossed Rhoda seemed in the company of her escort.

"Come!" she said on one occasion, when the voices of the two young men had grown inconveniently loud and near, "We'll get a better view over there, I think."

And she had deliberately laid her thrilling little hand on Simon's arm, and drawn him out of earshot.

Simon swelled with pleasure. It was the most delicious compliment he had received for years, and all the more so because secretly he rather admired young Mainwaring. The young blade was just the type that he himself had been some twenty years ago—tall, slim, fresh-complexioned, clean-jawed, with that romantic something in his dark eyes which most girls would have fallen for at once. No mean rival for a man of somewhat maturer youth!

But he could cope with him all right!

"I say!" he suggested after an hour or so, "If you've had enough of this, what about a spin in the car before the light fails?"

"I should love it!" she said at once.

And Archie, just advancing under cover of an open cigarette-case, was eliminated once and for all.

"Thank you, so much!" murmured Rhoda at the end of the day as Simon bade her farewell at the Mainwarings' door, "I have enjoyed it all."

And the look in her big brown eyes was so devastating that Simon nearly ran down a policeman on his way home, and was all but arrested for being drunk in charge of a car.

He found coffee awaiting him on his return home—a second infusion, which a man could sip in comfort, with his pipe in his mouth, his slipperless feet on the fender-seat, his tired limbs stretched inelegantly yet deliciously in the low arm-chair. It was just like Winifred to think of it—so soothing and thoughtful!

Nor did she worry him with talk. She just sat quietly reading as she sewed, ready to listen or be silent as he felt inclined, infinitely peaceful.

He dropped a word at last.

"Jove!" he said, "I'm tired!"

A wife would have taken the opportunity to point a moral, warned him against rheumatics, or at the least would have suggested a hot-water bottle in bed. Not so Winifred.

"Poor boy!" she said.

"Was he very bored?"

"Motors are more in my line than horses," he confessed.

"Never mind; it was all in a good cause. I hope Rhoda was duly grateful!"

What a good-natured fellow you are, said her placid eyes, a lamb led to the slaughter just to amuse the children.

"I think I gave her a pretty good time, taking it all round!" he said. "She seemed to enjoy it."

"I wish I had your energy!" she exclaimed.

Decidedly Simon was being spoiled just now!

He awoke in the morning eager for another

day, and much tickled to recall that his sleep had been broken by dreams of Fair Ladies. It was years since he had dreamed of anything more romantic than a sudden appreciation of his pre-War Russian Bonds. And it was years since he had sprung out of bed with so little effort.

The fact was, he thought he knew where he could meet Her that morning "by accident."



She had dropped a hint that she might be shopping in the High Street.

"Gad! But I'm potty on that girl!" he whispered exultantly to himself as he shaved.

Strolling past the shop windows bright with Easter novelties, he knocked up against—not Rhoda, but Archie Mainwaring, also strolling.

"Hallo, Mainwaring!" he said.

"Good morning!" grunted the young man suspiciously. "You're up early, aren't you—for you?"

But Simon was not to be ruffled.

"Nice day, isn't it?" he smiled.

"Rotten!" almost snarled the other, cursing under his breath as he strove in vain to light a cigarette. "Beastly wind—all this paper blowing about, and dust!"



"Ha!" exclaimed both, simultaneously starting towards her with uplifted hats.

"A peck of March dust is worth a King's ransom, you know!"

"And dust in the eyes is a blind man's prize!" retorted Archie sarcastically.

The two men stood facing one another awkwardly, each yearning for the other's absence, yet disliking the appearance of turning tail. And suddenly the problem was

solved for them by the emergence of Rhoda Mansell from a revolving shop door.

"Ha!" exclaimed both, simultaneously starting towards her with uplifted hats.

What an exquisite vision she was, lovelier than ever in the morning light, with her wide brown eyes, the glint of the sunshine in her hair, the soft bloom of spring petals on her cheeks! At first she seemed startled,

blushing a little as she nodded to Simon. Then her eyes swept over Archie.

"Hallo!" she said. "I thought you had gone to the office!"

The young man, suddenly destitute of confidence, muttered something about "having to see a man on business."

"Don't let me detain you!" she begged.

"Allow me!" interposed the more experienced Simon, relieving her of her parcels. "This is a bit of luck! How about a cup of coffee in a café somewhere, before you continue your labours?"

"Just what I was dying for!"

"Coming along with us, Mainwaring?" said Simon.

But the young fellow excused himself, glowering, and melted away—if the term may be used of the somewhat hard and abrupt manner in which he turned and strode about his business.

"Poor boy!" murmured Simon, half to himself. He

was young enough still to remember what it felt like to get the bird from a pretty girl! But Rhoda overheard him.

"It's his own fault!" she said with a little pout. "He shouldn't be so conceited!"

"Is he?" asked Simon. "In what way?"

"Never you mind!" she laughed sweetly.

"He's not a bad chap at heart, I think," said Simon, who had always had a sneaking fondness for the lad. "I wish I had his golf handicap, anyway!"

Rhoda squeezed his arm as they entered the café.

"Let's talk about something more interesting," she suggested. "Have you been to the Hippodrome this week?"

Hectic days!

But there was one fly in his amber. For once Winifred failed him. He would have preferred her to be a little more alert, not to say suspicious about it all. A spice of jealousy, a hint of alarm would have added piquancy to his "affaire." It was rather damping to find that she refused, tacitly, to regard it as an "affaire" at all. He might have been an amiable uncle flirting with his niece.

Naturally this attitude of Winifred's was a spur to any man of spirit. He would show her that he had not yet passed the dangerous age. Romance was by no means in the sear and yellow in short there was a bit of the reckless young devil about him still!

"What a child she is!" exclaimed Winifred on one occasion. "I can't imagine what you find to talk to her about!"

"Sweet nothings, I suppose!" grinned Simon mischievously. But Winifred only laughed.

As a matter of fact, the problem of keeping the girl amused was one that had caused him some anxious moments already. After the effortless spate of the first day or two, he had found it expedient to "swat up" a little beforehand—epigrams (not too subtle), storyettes, snips from the humorous weeklies, and so on. She read nothing, apparently, so it was perfectly safe.

And another thing. Winifred was showing just a little too much independence. Evidently if Simon was too busy to take her about, she would find someone who would! If there was one thing Simon loathed, it was to come home and find the house empty.

One day, his soul yearning for more solid meat than the Hippodrome, he got a couple

of stalls for Winifred and himself for the Opera. But his sister was dismayed when he showed them to her.

"I'm so sorry!" she said, her eyes full of concern. "But I've promised to go to the pictures with the Mainwarings. Archie's calling for me at seven."

"At seven?" was his first thought. "What about dinner?"

"I thought you wouldn't mind having it alone for once," she said apologetically.

"And just for the pictures!" he exclaimed, outraged. "Do you mean you're going to the movies—you!"

"Archie says——"

"Pah!" he growled. "You and your Archie! The empty-headed young puppy! It beats me!"

He looked at his sister, suddenly suspicious. This was not the first time she had gone out with young Mainwaring now he came to think. Winnie was a good ten years younger than he, Simon, but surely she would not be so silly.

"I can't think what on earth you have in common with a hobble-de-hoy like that!" he said sulkily.

"Oh, I don't know!" she was murmuring, with a smile like the Monna Lisa. "He's a nice boy, and he can be rather amusing at times!"

"Ten minutes of him would bore me stiff!" growled Simon disdainfully. A short time ago he had been sticking up for Archie, but this was a bit too thick.

"Well, I'm sorry," said Winnie mildly, "but I can't very well get out of it. Though, of course, I should love to have heard Lohengrin again. Why not ask Rhoda to go with you?"

Simon snorted involuntarily.

"Tchk!" he snapped. "She'd yawn her head off!"

And, a sudden spasm shaking him, he yawned himself at the mere thought of it, cavernously uncontrollably. He was more tired than he had thought. This continual racketing about! After all, he was not too sorry that the visit to the Opera was off. The room looked very cosy, there was a new

number of the "Spectator" on the smoker's table, the fire was warmer than the weather.

"I don't think I'll turn out again to-day," he decided. "A quiet evening at home'll do me no harm. Telephone to the Nadins or somebody, Winnie, and see if they would care to use the tickets."

"I'm awfully sorry!" she said, troubled.

"To tell the truth," he confessed, "I believe I'm *not*!"

And picking a fine Corona from the cedar box at his side, he pierced it with a sigh, opened his "Spectator" and threw himself back in the long, low chair. An editorial on "The Degeneration of Our Public Schools" engrossed his attention for a while, but the soothing balm of peace and comfort hung heavy on his lids. Soon they drooped, the paper fell to his knee, his tired eyes closed—and at the same moment the telephone from the further end of the room began to ring!

"It's Rhoda," announced Winifred from the instrument, holding out the receiver for him to take. "Now isn't that fortunate—she's at a loose end to-night, and you won't be alone, after all!"

"What's that?" asked Simon, blinking up at her with glazed eyes. "What d'say?"

"Rhoda wants you on the 'phone," repeated Winifred. "I told her about those tickets!"

"You *what*?" exclaimed her brother, starting upright in his chair.

"You were quite wrong—she says she simply *adores* Opera."

"Yes—'The Belle of New York' and 'The Merry Widow'!" he snarled. "That's what *she* means!"

"I don't suppose she's ever heard of them," retorted Winifred, with an unwonted shade of asperity in her voice. "You forget, they were long before her time!"

"Bah!" said Simon. Then suddenly he checked himself, aghast. How had it come to this, that he and Winnie were having "words"—or nearly so? It was years since that had happened!

"Sorry!" he mumbled, rising, and taking the crackling receiver from his sister's hand.

"Hallo! Yes, speaking. Yes, 'Lohengrin.' *Grand Opera*, y'know. Delighted! Rather; of course I will!"

The girl's clear, fresh voice came over the wires in reply like a song of birds on a Spring morning, bringing with it the picture of her eager little face, the wide brown eyes and dewy lips, and the scent of her warm furs.

"What's that?" he called, for the voice was not yet satisfied. "Oh! At the Melodeon? No, I hadn't thought of it. I say, won't we be rather late. *Three*, did you say—three in the morning?"

"Good heavens, Winnie!" he explained, turning to his sister, covering the mouthpiece of the telephone. "What do you think? She wants me to take her on to a dance at the Melodeon Hall *after the Opera*!"

"How lovely!" was the unexpected answer. "It's a special Carnival night; Archie was telling me. You *are* in for a gay time."

The receiver was crackling impatiently again—he took it up rather dazedly.

"Oh, fine!" he said. "Be a sport?—of course I will! Right-o! Bye-bye!"

Hanging the receiver thoughtfully upon its crutch, he returned to the fireside, drew on his slippers, neatly folded the "Spectator," closed the lid of his cigar-box, and flung his half-smoked stump into the fire.

"Well," he said, "you'll be off soon. If I don't see you again before you go, good-bye, and I hope you have a good time."

"Where are you going?" asked Winifred, startled, with a rapid glance at the clock on the mantelpiece.

"I'm going upstairs to change," he said heavily. "And have another shave; I shall need it before the night's out!"

The Opera was not so bad, after all. Rhoda was quite interested in the *toilettes* in the stalls, and thrilled by the number and weird shape of the instruments in the enlarged orchestra. The curly-headed young man with the drums fascinated her for quite a long time. As for Simon, there was a charm about her fresh young beauty and *naivete*!



*Simon picked out
trotting a few yards
arms. "There
Rhoda excitedly,
same*

But they left at the end of the second act, and took a taxi to the Melodeon Hall.

"What time shall I tell him to come back?" he asked, as they drew up at their destination.

"Oh, say three o'clock," replied the girl, her undimmed eyes sparkling with excitement. "If there are any extras, it won't hurt him to wait a little."

Simon, with the girl's quick eyes upon

him, twisted a groan into a gallant little laugh, pulled himself together, threw a spring into his gait, and followed her up the steps to the lighted vestibule.

Here, while waiting for Rhoda's reappearance from the cloak-room, he suddenly perceived a young man leaning against one of the gilded pillars, smoking a cigarette. It was Archie Mainwaring!



his sister fox-away in Archie's they are!" laughed seeing them at the time.

"You here, too!" he exclaimed quite amiably. "I thought you

had gone to the pictures!"

"We did," said the other drily; "and now we're here!"

"Who's 'we'?"

"Miss Percival and I, of course!" replied the boy.

His look challenged comment: he did not

change his negligent attitude; his dark eyes were sullen but alert, almost as though the encounter had been deliberately provoked. Everything about him, from the parting in his glossy hair to the sheen of his patent-leather pumps, was immaculate, yet somehow he looked primitive, dangerous.

Then suddenly Simon, coolly regarding him with the half-amused curiosity of a mastiff for the arched back and fluffed-out tail of some

defiant kitten, saw the expression in his eyes change as they shot past him to a further corner of the vestibule. The glitter melted to a softer light, the hard lines crumpled up, there was one brief glimpse of a tortured mouth, and the boy, turning on his heel, vanished in the crowd, just as Rhoda's hand was laid on her escort's arm.

"That was Archie!" said Simon. "Did you see?"

"Oh, yes!" she laughed carelessly. "I knew he'd be here."

"The deuce you did!" thought Simon, as he led her to the hall-room. Was there more in all this than met the eye? With a new clarity of vision, he covertly studied his partner's face, flushed surely with something more than the mere excitement of the dance, as her gaze darted hither and thither amongst the crowd.

"I've lost him!" she said at length. "Was he with anyone, did you notice?"

"He said he had brought Winnie."

"Oh!" she said.

The Carnival was the great annual event of the season, and the ballroom was crowded. A locally famous jazz band provided mingled vocal and instrumental music, swaying and jogging to the beat. A triple stream of dancers held the floor, and to seek for anyone in particular was like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack. But, after a while, Simon picked out his sister fox-trotting a few yards away in Archie's arms.

"There they go!" laughed Rhoda excitedly, seeing them at the same time.

"Let's stop a minute, if you don't mind," suggested Simon, drawing his partner out of the stream, and watching his sister as she circled once more into view.

She was a fine woman, was Winnie, tall, slim, exquisitely gowned, her coppery hair beautifully waved, but undeniably she was not looking her best to-night. Ordinarily she looked years younger than her age; but now, in the arms of that smooth-faced boy, even Winnie looked a little tired and faded.

Simon's hand flew to his jaw, stubbly for all his care. What about himself, he thought, as he turned and glanced half-involuntarily

at the girl on his arm, so smooth and bright and fresh. Careless, corrosive, merciless Youth; what could stand up against it, after all, save answering Youth?

Winnie and her partner were approaching again.

"Rhoda," he said suddenly, "what about an ice or a glass of elaret-cup before we go any further?"

"I don't mind," she agreed, her eyes glued to the whirling crowd. "But he quick!"

"I'll get the others to join us!" he said quickly, leaving Rhoda in a little alcove half-partitioned from the room. "Wait here!"

Archie looked distinctly surprised, as he sauntered up and stood hesitating at the entrance to the alcove, while Winnie flew to Rhoda's side.

"Hallo!" he said. "What's the idea?"

"We're dying for an ice, and I'm sure you could do with one, too," explained Simon. "So why not pause awhile and join forces? It'll save two of us fighting our way to the buffet."

"You mean one of us can fetch the lot?"

"Quite!" said Simon, smiling as he sat down next to Rhoda. "Do you mind?"

"Not a bit!" replied the boy, also sitting down and crossing his legs. "Mine's a strawberry: and don't forget the wafer!"

"I thought you wouldn't mind, Mainwaring," suggested Simon mildly. "You know the ropes better than I do!"

The boy smiled doggedly, and drew a cigarette from his case, obviously immovable.

"Don't bother him, Simon," interposed Rhoda, with mock alarm. "Archie would feel so lost among all those grown-up men!"

With a burning scowl the young man sprang from his seat and vanished in the crowd. It was the golden moment for which Simon had been working.

"I say, Winnie!" he cried excitedly, grasping his sister by the arm. "There's Johnson! You *must* come and speak to him before he goes! Quick!"

And with a swift apology to Rhoda, he dragged his astonished sister from the alcove.

"Whoever is Johnson?" she gasped.

In the vestibule he turned to her and explained

"It was only a ruse, Winnie," he said "Get your things on, quick as you can. We're going home!"

"But——"

"Oh. I know it's unpardonable leaving them like this. and I dare say they'll never speak to us again. But what does it matter, so long as they speak to each other? Poor kids. can't you see? They're dead sick of throwing dust in each other's eyes. Let's give them this chance: if they don't take it, that's *then* look out. But they will!"

For a couple of seconds Winnie stared at her brother in mute astonishment; it was outrageous: it was a miracle! Then, recovering her breath, she searched his smiling, eager face with narrowed eyes, until she understood. Then she, too, smiled.

"I see," she said slowly. "Yes. I believe you're right. It's the best thing we can do."

With one swift glance over her shoulder at the bright lights, flashing silks, and tireless fire-flies in the room beyond, she pulled her cloak around her shoulders and followed her brother out into the street.

The very next day it seemed that retribution was to overtake them. At half-past eleven in the morning, Miss Mansell and Mr. Mainwaring were announced.

"Now we're for it!" groaned Simon whimsically, following his sister across the hall.

Rhoda looked remarkably pretty in her new spring costume of apple-green and white.

The little chocolate-coloured hat went exceedingly well with her peach-blossom complexion, and her eyes were shining—not with anger, but with such a radiance of unshadowed joy that Simon's back straightened at once, and he was able to look his whilom adversary almost in the eye.

"Cheerio!" murmured Archie with a bashful smile.

But Rhoda pushed him eagerly aside.

"Oh, my dears!" she cried, flying forward with left hand outstretched. "Look what Archie's given me; isn't it too sweet!"

He took the slender hand and held it coolly up that Winifred and he might admire as it deserved the ruby and diamond ring on the third finger. Archie had been quick about it, the young rascal; but it was no more than he (Simon) and Winnie had expected, and so—the Best Of Luck!

"By the way," said Rhoda suddenly, after the congratulations were over. "We owe you both an apology for last night. Don't we, Archie?"

"Yes," murmured Simon non-committally, as the young man nodded gravely.

"We are really awfully sorry," she went on.

"We can't imagine how we came to do such a thing," chimed in her swain.

"The fact is," explained Rhoda contritely, "we were so excited about all this, that we left before the end——"

"At five to three," supplemented Archie huskily.

"And quite forgot to say good-bye."

THE END.

"Flappers' apology: Pardon Knee."—Film Fun U.S.A.

"I wonder what makes all Scotsmen such humorists?"

"It must be the gift."—Oregon Orange Owl.

"I am in my father's business."

"What do you do there?"

"I run up his working expenses."—Pele Mele, Paris.

The figure a mannequin gets depends upon the one she has.—London Calling.

"No girl ever made a fool out of me."

"Who was it then?"—Us. of S. Calif. Wampas.

She (Playing Piano): "That was Siegfried's Death."

He: "I'm not surprised."—Lustige Blätter Berlin.

HAIR APPARENT

By William Freeman

ILLUSTRATED BY FITZ

IT was one of those mornings which seem like a Christmas present delivered too late—clear sky, sharp boar-frost that the temperature was too low to melt, every puddle glazed, and a sun like a prize orange. But Robert Dacre was in no mood to appreciate Nature's quaint imitations of glass and fruit. The Fates had dealt him a couple of really nasty ones. Ann Peebleshire had turned him down with a flop that was practically audible.

And why? Because—ha, ha!—he wasn't up to the Peebleshire standard in appearance.

"You're not really *spruce*," Ann had said with the critical detachment which is the prerogative of the very aged and the very young. "And you never will be."

"I don't suppose I shall be really oak or fir, either," Robert had retorted. "But that needn't prevent the bells ringing forth a merry wedding chime."

"I'm sorry," said Ann. "But you can't expect anyone to marry a man with hair like—well, like yours. All over the place!"

"It's a dashed sight better than being bald," said Robert, which was tactless, because his runner-up where Ann was concerned was Peter Thetford, and if Peter were standing upright in five feet six of muddy water you wouldn't have known him from an ostrich-egg.

Ann had made a few further remarks, and then Robert had departed. He'd been angry then, twelve hours ago; now, after a night devoted more to thinking than sleeping, he was depressed but no longer entirely hopeless. He

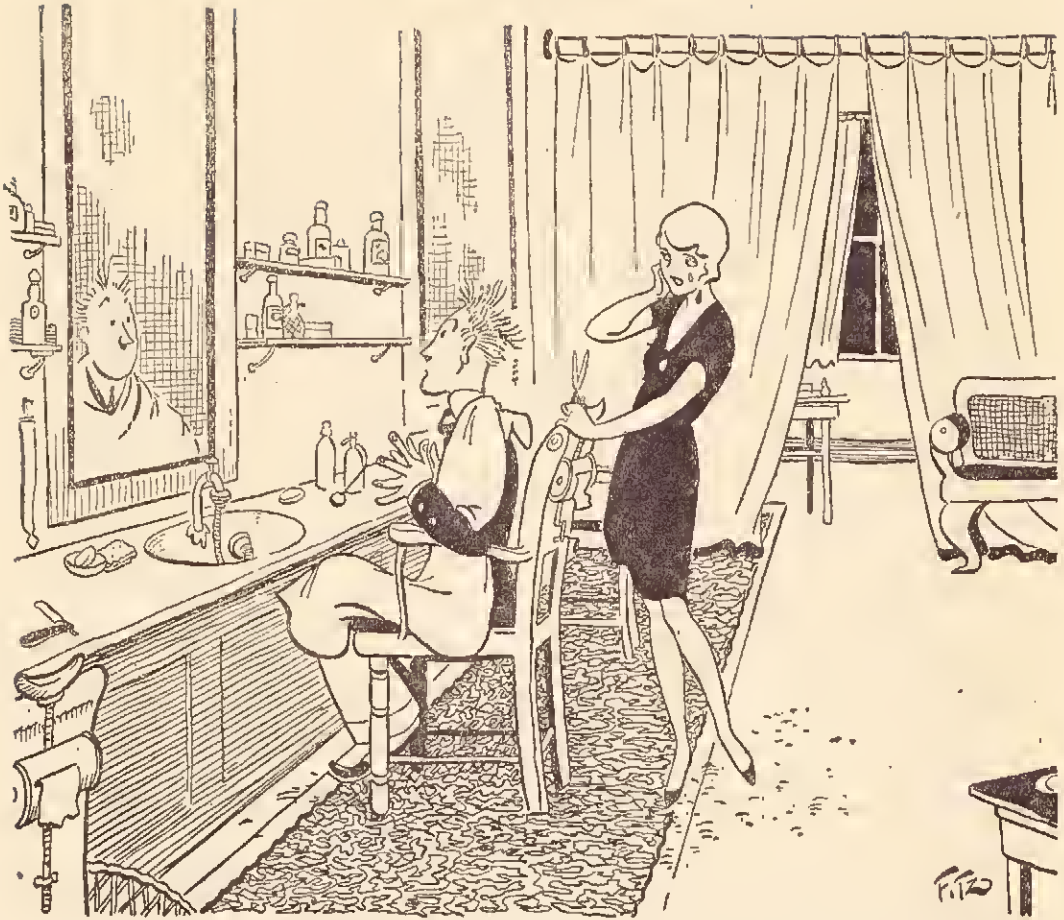
had dressed early, walked seven miles country-wards, breakfasted at a weird little eating-house with a company of market-gardeners, and finally found himself, as the clocks were striking ten, in the High Street of Polders End, in pre-war days a mere hamlet, now an ultra-modern suburb.

"*The Elite Hairdressing and Manicure Establishment—Proprietors E. and K. Westlake.*" The sunlight caught the gilt of the lettering on a swinging sign. It reminded him of the decision he had reached in the early morning hours. He would smarten himself up. He would struggle to reach the Peebleshire standard, and having reached it, once more try his luck with Ann.

He pushed open the door and found himself in a room furnished with the usual barber's chairs, three in a row, facing a trio of the usual basins; above were glass shelves fitted with brilliantine, lotions, and shaving-soap. At the end were curtains separating a small room from the rest of the shop. Through a gap in the curtains he had a glimpse of a manicurist's table, lamp, and instruments.

From this room a girl emerged. She looked about twenty; she also looked startled, one might even say scared. She was dressed trimly in black, and her eyes reminded him of a kitten's—except that a kitten wouldn't have had such long lashes.

"Good morning," said Robert, absurdly dithered. "Are you the hair-dresser and hair-bruise—that is to say, the hair-dresser and barber? In other words," he made



"Golly," said Robert, and decided that the final syllable of his remark ought to have been 'wog.'"

a violent effort, "are you in charge here, anyway?"

The kitten-eyed girl said, "Yes."

"My hair needs cutting," continued Robert, regaining confidence.

"Yes. Of course."

"You mean that you've noticed it?" He was now anxious to overcome her obvious shyness.

She nodded.

"Directly you came in."

"Well, what about it?"

"If you'll sit down——" The girl indicated the middle chair.

Robert sat down. It was the type of chair which is only a shade less complicated than those used by dentists, for several minutes she was busy with levers and pedals behind him.

"Short or long?" she inquired at last.

"Oh, medium," said Robert. "Something between a Pom and a wire-haired terrier, if you get me. But you're going to put one of those dust-sheet arrangements over me first, aren't you?"

"Certainly." But in the mirror opposite he caught the blush which told him that she'd forgotten all about it.

She fetched the usual shroud-like garment and swathed him in it. The shop was pleasantly warm, her touch soothing; his early morning walk had made him drowsy. Imperceptibly Robert drifted into a doze and, dozing, dreamed. He dreamed that he had a fresh argument with Ann Peebleshire, and that she finally lost her temper completely and bit his ear; bit it so fiercely that he awoke with a strangled yelp of agony.

"I—I'm most frightfully sorry," said the girl, "but your head suddenly jerked forward, and the scissors slipped."

"No damage done?" Robert asked. She was dabbing his ear with a handkerchief, so that the glass didn't enlighten him.

"Not really much. Just a tiny chip off the edge. It'll stop bleeding directly."

"Good! I'm afraid I went all blur. It's the atmosphere. What about the hair-cut?"

"I'm getting on with it."

"Righto!"

He settled himself back in the chair again and closed his eyes—not to sleep; the sting of his wounded ear made that impossible—but because he wanted to visualise Ann's face, to recall exactly how she'd looked when they parted. Incredible that even for an hour or so his memory of her should have faded! He couldn't even remember what her eyes were like, except that they weren't kittenish.

His meditations were brought to a sudden end by something warm splashing on the nape of his neck.

"Crikey, she's chipped me somewhere else!" he decided, and then realised that the splash wasn't blood, but that colourless fluid known as tears.

"Here, I say!" he protested, turning.

"S-s-sorry," said the hair-cutter. Another splash landed on his sleeve.

"What's wrong?"

"Everything. Look at yourself!"

Robert looked—and gasped.

"Wow!"

"What *does* it look like?"

"It looks," said Robert, trying to be generous, "as though it had been nibbled by a rabbit in a hurry, who'd mislaid his false teeth."

"Exactly. A rabbit," she amended fiercely, anxious not to spare herself, "suffering from delirium tremens. I ought to have told you that I didn't really know anything about hair-cutting. If only Teddy hadn't gone up to London!"

"Who's Teddy?"

"My brother."

"Are you and he the 'E. and K. Westlake'?"

"Yes. I'm the 'K'—Kathleen. The real beginning was when the solicitors wrote and told us that our shares were practically waste-paper, and that there wouldn't be any income worth talking about. And they were shares which father always insisted would make our fortunes."

"But why start a barber's shop? What I mean is, it's such a dashed unusual line for amateurs to take up."

"It was Teddy's idea. He's always doing unusual things. He's really an artist, and the artistic temperament is like that. He read in a trade magazine that five to twenty pounds a week could be easily earned by anyone after a month's tuition, and that the same advertisers who taught you would afterwards fit up a shop on the instalment system. So he took the course——"

"But couldn't stay it?"

"And I studied manieuring, and——"

The opening of the shop-door interrupted her. A young man wearing spats, faultlessly creased trousers, and a 1929-pattern howler entered.

"I want——" he began, in a languid voice. His eyes fell on Robert.

"Golly!" he breathed, and fled.

"The next syllable," said Robert, "would undoubtedly have been 'wog.' About the worst advertisement ever for your business. If that was Polders End's brightest and best——"

"Which it was," said Miss Westlake bitterly. "Only yesterday I heard him telling someone outside that he meant to come in and help to set the rotten little show on its legs."

"Is there a rival establishment he can patronise?"

"Not nearer than Little Wretford. That's why we decided to come here."

"When will your brother be back?"

"I don't know. Of course, I ought to have told you so at first. But I hated to turn away a customer, we've had so awfully few."

"Naturally. I mean—well, anyway, it's nothing to worry about. A swipe or so with a hair-brush, a parting here, a deft

smoothing-over there, and only the expert eye would detect anything abnormal."

"You're wrong," said Miss Westlake miserably. "I wish I could believe that you weren't." She handed him a pair of brushes.

Robert did his best. But the result wasn't encouraging.

"Still, with my cap on," he persisted doggedly.

"Where is your cap?"

They searched the shop, but fruitlessly.

"You're sure you had a cap?" she asked, at last.

"I was afraid you'd ask that," said Robert.

"Candidly, I'm not sure. Mine's the sort of memory that never is."

"You can't possibly go out into the High Street without one!"

"It would be risky. But isn't there a rear exit?"

"Yes, across the little yard behind, and out through a gate into the passage that the dustman and coalmen use. But it seems a horrible way of getting rid of a customer."

"My dear Miss Westlake, what is good enough for a Polders Eud dustman is good enough for me. I propose to steal quietly forth, purchase a new hat at the nearest hattery——"

"Cobson's, at the corner of King George's Avenue, is the nearest."

"Mention casually that I'm never going to have my hair cut in Little Wretford again,



Robert leapt over the plunging figure.

and return to town by the first tram available for—forgive me—expert attention."

"I wish you hadn't to."

"Things like this," said Robert earnestly, "just happen, and you mustn't let it worry you. If I'd any advice to offer, it would be to shove a notice in the window, 'Closed to-day except for manicuring. By order of the Home Secretary.' People will merely think it's the latest manifestation of Dora. Is this my homeward route?"

"Straight through."

"Thanks. May I have your

address? I'd like to let you know—er—what happens."

She handed him a circular. Robert thanked her again, reached the further door, and paused.

"By the way, I've forgotten to——"

"If," said Miss Westlake fiercely, "you offer to pay me for what I've done, I—I shall have hysterics."

"In that case," said Robert, "I suppose we'd better limit ourselves to 'Thanks very much' and 'Good-bye.'"

He opened the door, and found himself in an asphalted yard. At the end, a gate led to a narrow pathway; beyond that was the railway embankment.

"Queer business, Life," mused Robert, and he passed briskly through. "Yesterday that girl and I were complete strangers; to-day——"

He sighed, slid his hand into his overcoat pocket, discovered his cap there, sighed again, put it on, and allowed his thoughts to drift—a had practice in a thoroughfare less than a yard wide. A young man in a grey suit, suddenly appearing at the point where the path bent sharply to the left, collided with him and then gripped him by the arm.

"Half-time!" protested Robert.

The young man's grip tightened.

"Your time's more likely to be twelve months. What's the game, my lad, prowling around the backs of other people's houses?"

Robert panted, perhaps, three seconds before he answered. One can do a good deal of thinking in that time. Though the young man's eyes, now glowering menacingly at him, couldn't be described as kitten-like, they very definitely reminded him of the girl he had just left. So did his mouth. The total resemblance was, in short, strong enough for Robert to identify him as Mr. Edward Westlake. If Edward (argued Robert, in those vital three seconds) discovered the hideous hash his sister had made of her solitary customer's head-thatch, there would almost certainly be Big Trouble. And the poor kid had had trouble enough already, and a hit over.

"Go and play hide-and-seek with someone else," he suggested, "and don't ask silly questions. I'm in a hurry to get to the station."

"It's the other kind of station you'll visit this morning!"

"Tut-tut, how grim! Going to let go, or aren't you?"

"I'm not."

"Don't blame me, then," said Robert gaily. He jerked himself free, ducked, clutched at Edward Westlake's legs, brought him down, leapt over the plunging figure, and ran.

As he sped round the angle towards King George's Avenue and the station, a sudden thought struck him. He clapped his hand to his trouser-pocket. It was empty. All his pockets were empty. He'd come out without any money at all. He couldn't have paid for his hair-cut, even if Kitten-eyes had

allowed him. And the railway company weren't likely to exhibit a similar generosity when it came to taking a ticket back to Town.

"This," said Robert to himself, "is my lucky day. My *really* lucky day!"

He made up his mind quickly. As he emerged again into the High Street, he turned left, instead of right, and obliterated himself in a shop doorway. An instant later, Edward dashed out, paused long enough to make sure that he wasn't in sight, and then continued the pursuit stationwards. Robert waited until the enemy was well beyond range, and then returned by the normal entrance to the Elite Hairdressing establishment.

Kathleen emerged from the inner room.

"I'm sorry," she began, "but Mr. Westlake is out, and— Oh!"

"Yes, he's out all right," said Robert. "A whole lot out. That's really what I've come back to explain. He met me in Coal-heaver's Alley just now, and instantly decided that I was committing a felony. However, I've left him—"

"But where's Teddy now?"

"Somewhere between the Wesleyan Chapel and the taxi-rank, I imagine. He assumed that I'd halted for the station because I mentioned, before we parted, that I was in a hurry to catch a train, and hurled himself in that direction, missing me en route."

"It's all frightfully confusing."

"But not," Robert assured her, "so confusing as it was. The fundamental trouble at present is that I came away from my digs without any money. Silly thing to do, but Ann's as much to blame as anyone."

"Who's Ann?"

"Ann? Oh, just a girl. Anyhow, I've come back to make a suggestion."

"What is it?"

Robert explained.

"Goodness knows what Edward will say," she sighed.

"It'll be quite a lot," Robert assured her. "You know what the artistic temperament is. So fluent, so fresh! That's why I'd rather you weren't here."

Edward Westlake reached the station,

made reasonably sure that Robert wasn't there, and without wasting further time returned to the shop. He had scared the fellow, if he hadn't caught him. He walked straight in, began, "I say, Kathleen—" and broke off at the sight of a swathed figure in the middle seat.

"Are you the jolly old barber?" demanded the figure. "Because if you are, I want a hair-cut."

Edward stared at him incredulously. Fluency, for once at any rate, seemed to have deserted him.

"You're wondering," Robert continued, "how my hair came to grow like this. Answer adjudged correct—it didn't.

I invented a patent automatic electric clipper, and the darn thing ran amok."

"Are you trying to make me believe you're not the burgling blighter I grabbed half an hour ago?"

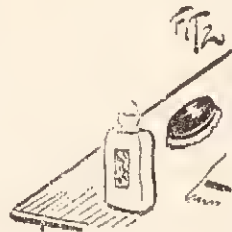
"My dear young man, I don't know whether you always welcome your customers as cordially as this, but if so, I can understand why there isn't a queue outside. All I wanted was a hair-trim. If you can manage that—

"I can, but I'm hanged if I will."

"In that case, I shall walk out of the shop



"It looks as though it has been nibbled by a rabbit in a hurry."



without my hat, and let the élite of Polders End draw their own conclusions."

"Go to blazes! Where's my sister?"

"How should I know. Are you going to trim my hair, or aren't you?"

"It'd give me a heap more satisfaction to give you in charge. However," concluded the temperamental Edward, who, after a rapid investigation, had discovered no visible evidence of burglary or other crime, "I will trim your confounded hair, if only because it's the last hair I shall ever trim." He took up the scissors and comb. "Listen to me, you moth-eaten experimentalist. When I

went up to Town by the eight-forty-nine this morning, I was broke, busted, done in. Assets—several final notices and an outsize in overdrafts. The solicitors' letter didn't drop a hint; he's the old-fashioned, secretive sort. When I came back by the ten twenty-three, and incidentally ran into you or some unfortunate facsimile, it was with the cheering knowledge that the shares the pater had left had still got a kick in them. In other words, had jumped to fifteen bob apiece, because the experts have found any amount of

tin that nobod' guessed was there. And we've twenty thousand of those shares between us."

"Splendid!"

"I'm not asking for your confounded congratulations; I'm simply telling you because you're the nearest approximation to a human being that happens to be handy. Now forget it, and keep still." And Edward, who in the course of his concentrated course of hair-dressing really had learnt a thing or two, proceeded to repair the ravages of the previous attack. He was busy with the finishing brushes when the door at the rear was timorously opened, and Kathleen appeared.

"Oh, you're back!" she said.

"I'm hack," Edward assured her, "and all the world's a garden of delight. Kath, old dear, everything's O.K. We're off the rocks again, for keeps. We can chuck the whole rotten business, and take up Angora rabbit breeding or ostrich-farming, or anything else yon like."

"Oh Edward, how splendid!"

"My adjective exactly," murmured Robert.

"You," said Edward, "being now passable, if not presentable, may catch that train you'd such a hankering for."

"Don't go yet," said Kathleen, as Robert, having risen obediently, took his hat and moved towards the door.

"Why not?" he demanded.

"Because, you blithering idiot, you're still draped in the firm's overall," said Edward.

Kathleen, advancing, extricated him.

"It's my conviction that you two have met before," said Edward, with a flash of intuition.

His sister faced him calmly.

"And suppose we have?"

"Then there's some sort of mystery in cold storage. And as I like my mysteries limited to fiction, the beggar had better stay and have some lunch."

"If you imagine that Mr. Dacre——"

"Mr. Dacre," said Edward, with another flash of intuition, "is going to shake hands and cry quits."

"Er—quite so," said Robert.

It was nearly three o'clock when Robert emerged from the Tube Station at the Marble Arch. And there he practically ran into Ann Peebleshire, who lived quite near.

He was conscious of a curious and original sensation—something between disloyalty and embarrassment.

"Good-afternoon," said Ann.

"Good-afternoon," said Robert, raising his hat.

"Oh, good gracious!" said Ann. Her voice rose in a hysterical squeak. "What have you been doing?"

"Doing?"

"To your hair. How utterly ghastly!"

"I'm sorry."

"So am I. I don't suppose it was your fault, but whoever's responsible ought to be stopped from barbering altogether. Even with your hat on it's awful. You ought to go into a monastery or somewhere for a month."

"They'd make me cut it shorter still there."

"I suppose it was partly my fault, and I'm frightfully sorry, and all that, but you mustn't dream of coming to see me, or—or asking me to marry you, or any silliness of that sort, until your hair's properly grown again."

"I won't."

There was a little pause.

"You don't bear malice, do you?" said Ann. There was something in his manner she could not analyse. But then, bright young thing as she was, Ann wasn't really clever.

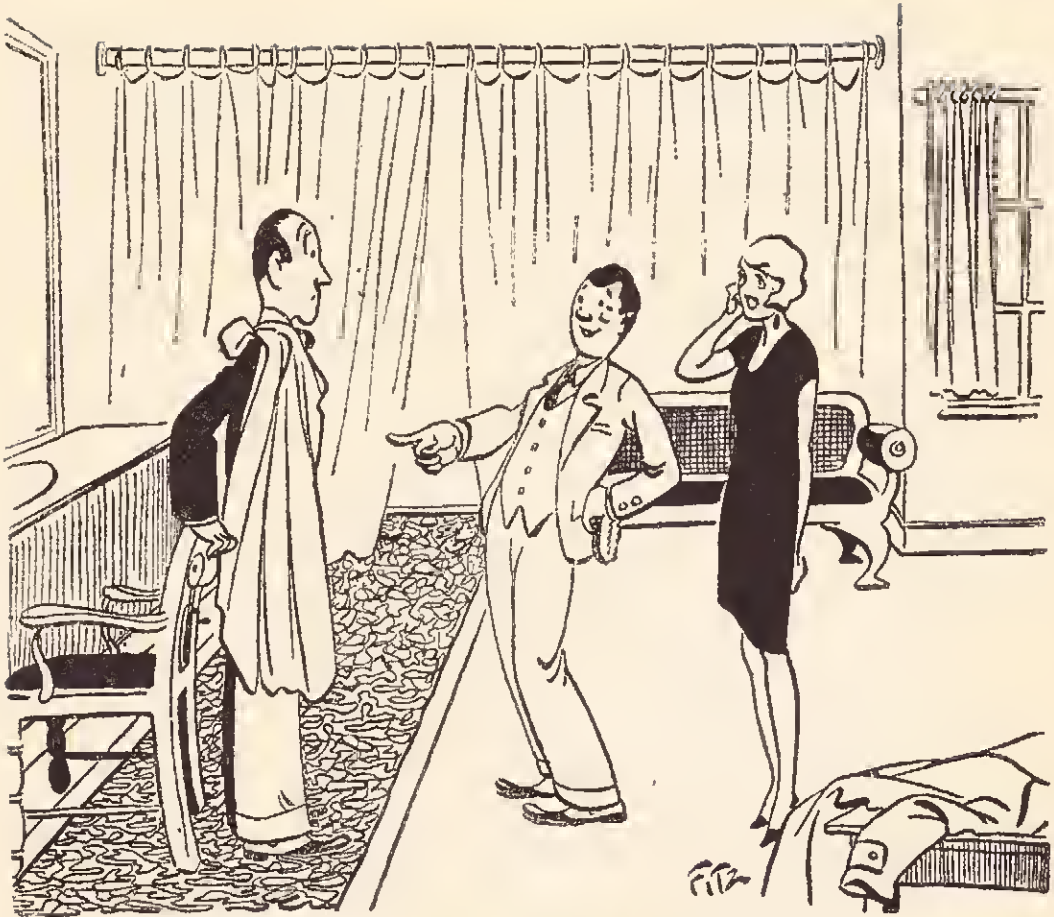
"Not a bit. Much obliged for the warning. Good-bye."

He took a taxi hack to his rooms. In front of the mirror over the dining-room mantelpiece he surveyed himself critically. Ann was right, it *was* ghastly. At least a fortnight must elapse before he could call and see her. Why didn't he care more? The fact remained that he didn't care at all.

"Extraordinary!" said Robert to himself.

"One of those psychological problems which it'd take another woman to explain. I bet Kathleen would be able to—she's the understanding type."

And the next day, still worried by the problem, and remembering that he owed the



"It's my conviction that you two have met before," said Edward.

Westlakes his fare to town, he went down to Polders End again.

Robert was quick to notice that the swinging sign which yesterday displayed "The Elite Hairdressing and Manicure Establishment" had now been re-placed by another of more sinister appearance, announcing that "from to-morrow this business will be under entirely new management."

He gave a pleasant sigh as he entered the barbery interior, but soon discovered from the temperamental one that Kathleen was out.

"We're chucking the business here right away as you can see," said Edward. "A local man takes over to-morrow. My sister's keen on a flat in Kensington. Spent most of

yesterday evening studying maps and advertisements. Hipplewhite Gardons seems to be final choice."

"That's a turning off my road," said Robert, his heart performing inexplicable evolutions. "We may become near neighbours."

"Possibly," said Edward, not as though it really mattered much.

But several other people knew better—Robert, when he looked into those kitten-eyes again, and Kathleen when she saw that brown, weirdly cropped head, and, of course, Cupid.

And afterwards, Ann.

But she didn't go to the wedding.

THE END.



ONE THING AND ANOTHER

By ROBERT MAGILL.

Illustrated by GEORGE THOMPSON.

I SEE that the latest fashion for a man at a dance is to wear one glove on the hand that he puts behind the girl to hold her up in case she slips over his big feet, the idea being that he won't soil her frock, or if she is wearing one of those frocks that starts on a low note, that his cold hand doesn't make her shiver.

This reminds me that I have dozens of gloves stored away at home, but none of them in pairs, because I never have two gloves together for five minutes before I lose one I lose only gloves. I never lose one sock, or one shoe, and I never lose both gloves. But when I come back from a walk I sort of check things over. I have brought back myself, my hat, my stick, my dog, my wife, if I took her out with me, and there is one glove. But the other—

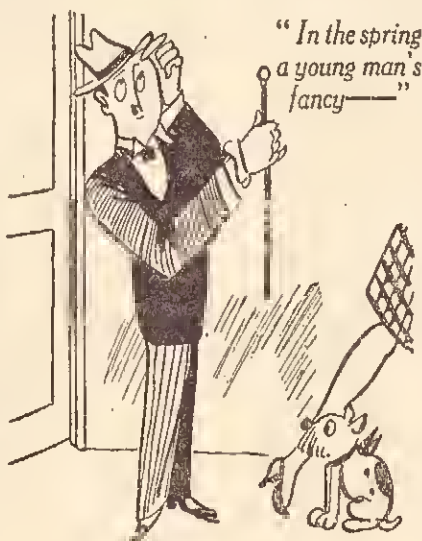
I don't know why this is, unless perhaps gloves get to hate each other, and get a divorce as soon as is possible. My case is not singular. Everybody knows that if you put two gloves on the hall table overnight, there will be only one there in the morning, so that unless one glove turns cannibal and eats the other, there is no explanation. Mean-

while, I always go out with two gloves. One I wear, and the other, like a little gentleman, I carry in my hand. I couldn't wear it if I tried, because they are both built for the left hand.

In the Spring a young man's fancy is supposed to turn to thoughts of love, but seeing how the wiuds blow and the rain rains, and the fog and snow and hail and stuff get worse and worse, his thoughts really turn towards Brompton lozenges and lung tonic. Anyhow, it's silly to try and make love to a girl when your nose is running, and all you can say to her is something like, "By darlidg, you are the best charbidg dabsel id the world. Will you barry be?"

Even married men seem to suffer as much from colds in the Spring as single ones, which is strange, when you consider how carefully their wives make them keep their woollen underthings on and wrap themselves up. But quite likely when a man suffers from matrimony it undermines his constitution and he falls an easy prey to any roving microbe.

Consequently, when my young friend Cuthbert went to work the other morning with a head that felt as though it was full of





Host (to guest who has done nothing but waste ammunition all day): "By the way, you're not connected with the R.S.P.C.A. by any chance?"



Dissatisfied Customer (firing parting shot): "You oughter be sandbagged with a pound of your own sugar."

boiling water, a nose that was stopped up, and a voice so hoarse that it sounded like the last notes of a gramophone as the spring runs down, he was not surprised. He knew he'd got his usual spring cold.

Now the trouble about having a cold is that it isn't only your cold. You can't enjoy it alone. Everybody you meet wants to share it with you, and they all know something that will cure it. Mind you, they know only specifics for colds. They never know the best thing to do for a floating kidney, or a loose liver. But there are so many infallible cures for a cold that one wonders why so many people suffer from colds all the time, unless perhaps they go out and catch cold deliberately so that they can practise their cures.

Anyhow, when Cuthbert went into his boss and said, "Good mornin', sir," the boss looked quite pleased, and said "Ah, Cuthbert, I see you've got a cold." You would have thought he was Sherlock Holmes. Then he went on, "I know a splendid thing for a cold, my lad. Stay at home to-night and rub your chest all over with camphorated oil."

The typist, on the other hand, didn't believe in camphorated oil. She told him to go home and eat plenty of gruel with some paraffin in it. Cuthbert thinks she said paraffin, although it might have been paregoric.

At lunch time a friend of his said, "There's only one thing to do with a cold. You want to feed it." So Cuthbert fed it on a chop, a steak, a portion of pork-pie, some jam-roll, a slab of cake, a tea, a coffee, and a cocoa, some cheese, and the back page of the menu, which adhered to the cheese. But later on another man said you ought to starve a cold, so Cuthbert starved it until tea-time.

Meanwhile, the cold behaved like all colds. It got worse, and then stayed the same, thank you, until it got worse again for a change.

They say that a cold will last twenty-one days if you don't do anything for it, whereas, on the other hand, if you have expert advice it lasts three weeks. Cuthbert had already had enough advice to make it last six months, but there was more to come.

He sneezed the hat off a man in the train, and the man said the only remedy for a cold was to eat a large raw onion. He didn't say how it cured the cold, but perhaps the idea is that the smell chokes all the microbes, so that they can't breathe, and die of suffocation.

By now Cuthbert was feeling so sorry for himself that he was prepared to try anything, and when the man next door met him at the gate, Cuthbert got out a piece of paper and a pencil ready to write down the next certain cure. The man next door said, "Don't you take any notice of the silly things people say to you. You take a hottle of whisky to bed and drink it. By and by you either won't have any cold, or else you'll feel so happy that you won't care if you've got ten colds."

This being so, Cuthbert went into the dining-room and sneezed a picture off the wall. Then he turned round, sneezed himself backwards across the room till he bumped his head on the mantelpiece, and

knocked a vase into the fender. Mrs. Cuthbert came in, looked at him once, and said:

"Darling, you've got a cold."

He admitted it. It was of no use trying to conceal it. He was sneezing the whitewash off the ceiling. She made him go straight to bed, while she prepared a mustard plaster. The idea of this is to draw the cold out. She put enough mustard in it to draw Cuthbert himself out of bed.

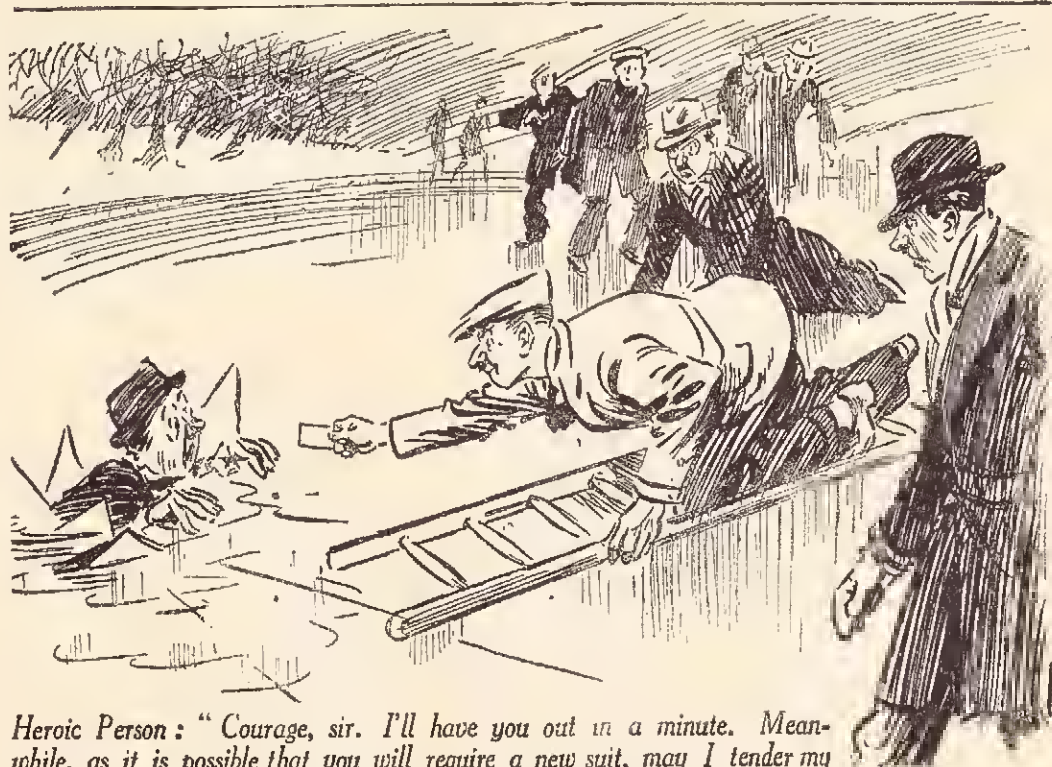
Meanwhile, he found an onion, the whisky, the camphorated oil, and most of the other things he'd been told about. He meant to try the lot and leave nothing to chance. There might be several kinds of colds, and he didn't



A faint flavour of peppermint, when he drank the camphorated oil.



She: "I never thought you would dare to kiss me!" He: "Well, there was a good deal of danger about it, so—er—I thought we'd better face it together."



Heroic Person: "Courage, sir. I'll have you out in a minute. Meanwhile, as it is possible that you will require a new suit, may I tender my card? I represent a well-known tailoring firm."

know which kind his was, but with luck he'd cure it.

He had eaten part of the onion when his mother-in-law came up. She had called, and had heard about his cold. Like everybody else, she knew the right thing to do, and she'd brought him some tablets made to a secret specification of her own, although when she had made him eat three, he could have guessed what they contained. It was glue, ink, soap, coal, varnish, and mud. They blended beautifully with the onion, but he found it impossible to taste the whisky, although he did detect a faint flavour of peppermint when he drank the camphorated oil. Of course, he ought not to have drunk that, but he was too far gone now to worry. He would have eaten the mustard plasters, too, if Mrs. Cuthbert hadn't stopped him.

He had no cold left next morning. The fact of the matter was that he was afraid to sneeze, in case he met somebody else with some further horrible remedy to suggest.

No man who is proud of the name of Englishman neglects to take his cold tub every morning. It is always called a tub, although it is really a tin enamelled bath. When I say that he takes a cold bath, he claims that he takes it, anyway, although I have my own opinion.

A cold bath is undoubtedly very good for you. After you have taken your early morning exercise, and opened your pores, your cold bath shuts them again, so that you can have a quick rub down and open them once more. You may ask what is the use of all this opening and shutting, and whether it wouldn't save trouble to leave the pores ajar, but the answer is that all the best people do it.

Moreover, your cold bath braces the nerves, makes the circulation of the blood brisker,

and increases the appetite; besides, in course of time, it makes you go blue all over, and stay blue, which is a very pretty effect if you wear one of the latest pink shirts.

Unfortunately a cold bath is not always very pleasant. When you undress and stand on the cold oilcloth, you feel that nothing on earth could make you any colder. But there is something that will. You put your foot in the water. It freezes your foot. Your blood turns to ice, and you can feel it, in little pieces, all tinkling against each other as they go through your veins. You breathe ice. After having more or less wetted yourself over, you try to wipe your self dry, but the

towel only makes you wetter, until you give it up and dress before you get covered with a sheet of ice. Then, as you get warm again, you turn into one large chilblain.

All this, however, need not happen if you take your cold bath in an intelligent fashion. For example, if the oilcloth feels cold, take up the carpet in the drawing-room, and have a good coke fire built somewhere in the bath-room.

Even now the water in the bath will be cold—if you've been fool enough to

turn on the cold tap.

But why not fill it from the other one? It's still a cold bath, only you're using hot water.

Finally, you may still feel cold when you undress, in which case, why undress? Keep your clothes on while you have your bath. I admit that you will get them wet if you go into the water. This being so, carry the matter further and don a raincoat, or put up an umbrella; that is if you're not superstitious. But why get into the water, after all?

It's only a matter of using common-sense, as you can see

THE END.



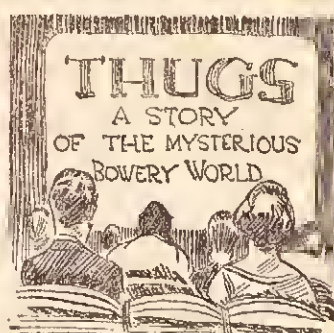
So keep your clothes on while you have your bath.



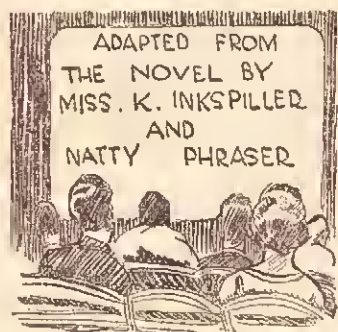
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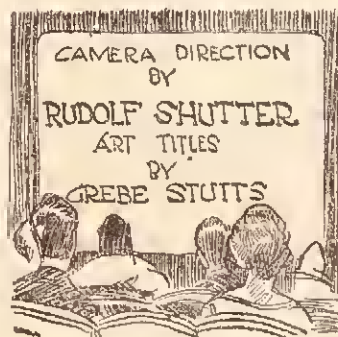
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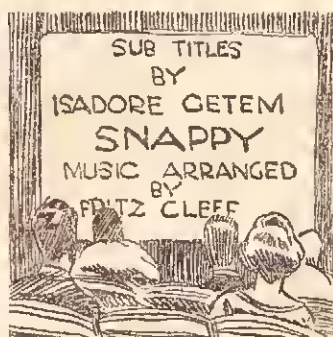
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4 p.m.



4.15 p.m.



4.20 p.m.



4.30 p.m.



4.45 p.m.



4.50 p.m.



5 p.m.

Love Conquers All

by ALTA MAY COLEMAN

Illustrated by

GILLIS
WILSON

MANY old tales there are of bold knights who did hattle for fair ladies and in strange landes. They slew fiery dragons and with one blow felled an hundred villaines, winning the captive maid from her tower through the strength and potency of true love.

And to this day it is certain sure that true love conquers all, though the frightening dragons are subtly hid from mortal eye, and the landscape holds no moated grange and fretted tower, but only great painted signboards flaunting themselves on hilltops where once a castle might have stood.

"You are now two miles from Brentown," the billboard informed Henry Bryant, "site of the University of East Anglia. The town was fortified in 1639 by a band of rebels led by Giles Watt. and——"

But who can pause for prose when the road winds like a poem between woodlands in full leaf, and the cut-out, unforbidden, sings a pæan to the slanting hills. Certainly not a stern critic of ear performance who is perfectly satisfied. Certainly not a young man, resplendent in a suit of tweeds the Prince of Wales might have envied, who has just received another raise from the Dalmartin Motor Company and is on husiness bent.

Henry had advanced by hard work from the oil-mapped overalls of the mechanic to the dusty sweater of the automobile road tester. Now—thanks to his device for improving the Dalmartin carburettor—he was rolling on balloon tyres on the royal road called Easy Street. For the last three months he had been

touring the eastern counties, his duty the pleasant one of showing dealers and garage men how the addition of a little gadget invented by a hright young man would increase Dalmartin mileage. Not work—a holiday he called it. Each day a fresh road; each night sound sleep in some pleasant country inn; no worries; no regrets.

For years Henry had had regrets. At the time he had had to quit school he burned with ambition to go to a university—to be a crack football player, of course, and to become—well, probably a lawyer. What chance had a fellow without an education? And for years Henry had felt himself handicapped. University men, lawyers, professors, and such like had a mysterious advantage. He felt abashed in their presenee and envious. For years the ten magic letters, "university," staring at him as now on the great billboard, would have been sufficient to plunge him into gloom.

But to-day Henry read the flashing sign without a pang. It was a wholly happy young man, who asked of heaven nothing more, that the good citizens of Brentown beheld rolling at lordly ease through their main thoroughfare, sliding with silken exactness to a stop just a car's length beyond the petrol pump in front of Carson's garage.

Here Henry was at once surrounded by a group that included Sam Carson, his chief mechanic, the mechanic's helper, the freckle-faced hoy who tended the petrol tank, and all the drivers not on duty, for Sam supplied the town's taxi service. And after Henry's work of art—just take a look at the present



A delightful vision in a dress of heaven's own blue, and crowned with a wide-brimmed halo. A halo in Henry's eyes.

Dalmartin carburettor if you don't believe it deserves the title—had been viewed in and out of action, had been taken apart and put together by every one of them, they stood about for a while and gossiped. Oh, about

cars, of course! What else on earth is there? They inspected Henry's Special Six in detail. They followed him as he made the rounds of the cars in the garage, one by one, as a horseman does a stable. They opened up

the hood of an old chain-drive Mirador and looked over its mighty pre-war cylinder block, their eyes heaming with worshipful admiration that mechanics have for a noble piece of machinery. They respectfully watched Henry turn over the engine, for there's a knack about cranking these old cars. And then, with rapt attention of a concert audience, they all listened a while blissfully to the exhaust.

At last Henry and Sam strolled to the outer doorway to talk out the finale of their business, Henry with a large smudge on his left cheek and another round his right eye because he had forgotten that his hands were covered with that composition of grease, oil, carbon, and road dust which garages seem able to produce in inexhaustible quantities. But this was Henry's native element, you might say, and a happier person you couldn't have found in all Norfolk or Suffolk as he stood idly watching the sun peer through the avenue of over-arching trees that marked the beginning of the residence section.

And then a funny thing happened: Henry saw a vision! Advancing through the patterned light and shade she came, a most unusual, delightful apparition in a dress of heaven's own blue and crowned with a wide-brimmed halo—no, a hat, of course—that shed a golden radiance over the sweetest, demurest, most adorable face in the world.

Now, the hat was an old one which had done duty many summers, as Ann Forrester could have told you. And the dress was a faded blue chambray made by Aunt Geneva in the simple style she was mistress of. Ann always wore such frocks because—oh, because Aunt Geneva made them and because Ann's father, Professor Forrester, received a monthly stipend that couldn't be stretched beyond—oh, well, what did clothes matter, anyway? Especially to a girl who read Latin and Greek as fast as most people read movie captions, who divided her time between the university lecture-room and the library at home, and who had only to open a book to wear robes of splendour in whatever fashion and elime she fancied. Who could become "divinely fair" or "with hair like the raven's wing," according to her mood.

This delightful arrangement, however, kept

Ann from any great satisfaction when she looked in the mirror. Her nose was straight, what there was of it. Her lips were red, her eyes were blue, like the roses and violets of the old rhyme. And, thank Heaven, her eyelashes weren't so short and sandy that you couldn't see them, like Sarah Kimball's. But, compared to what might have been—

No, of course, Ann never dreamed that, by merely walking down Brentown High Street on a summer's afternoon, she made the blue sky seem bluer to Henry Bryant, and the sunlight brighter and brighter, culminating in a burst of brilliance as she stopped at the garage door where he and Sam Carson were standing.

"Will you send a cab, Mr. Carson?" said Ann. "I'm going to Belton this afternoon."

"To visit your Aunt Emily?"

Ann nodded. And, conscious of Henry's eyes on her, she looked up at him. Which made Sam say:

"Miss Forrester—Mr. Bryant of the Dahmartin Company."

"How do you do?" said Henry, putting out his hand and then quickly snatching it back again.

"Oh, you ought to see your face!" said Sam, laughing out loud.

And Ann had to smile.

But Henry didn't up and turn the joke back on Sam, or excuse himself to Ann, or pull out his initialed linen handkerchief and ask her for a bit of help tidying up, as he would have done with most girls. He just stood there looking at Ann, not saying a word. How could he speak when his mind was racing like an engine gone mad, whirling and hurrying with thoughts—strange, wonderful thoughts, like music which couldn't be put into words?

"Going on the five o'clock?" said Sam to Ann.

"Yes. There'll be a trunk. It's little, but it's heavy."

"Full o' hooks?" pronounced Sam knowingly. "Got to expect that from Professor Forrester's daughter."

"Professor Forrester's daughter?" Henry stammered in a funny, choking voice.

"And well-nigh as smart as her dad right now, from what I heard up at the University. She'll be takin' his job away from him one o' these days!"

Ann smiled at this pleasantry. Then with a nod of good bye to Sam, and the fleetest glance and the quickest little tilt of the head to Henry, on down the street she sped to Fantle's grocery shop where she had to get a dozen fruit-jar rings for Aunt Geneva.

There wasn't the slightest need for haste. But so fast Ann hurried you might have thought her little black slippers were running away with her. So fast was her heart beating and so hot and flushed were her cheeks, that Mr Fantle warned her against sunstroke, and cautioned her to keep on the shady side of the street.

And this Ann did, the whole long, round-about way home. She felt that she would rather die than walk back past Carson's garage. At the same time she felt she would die if she didn't. And, strange, considering the heat of the day, she climbed the hill twice. Yes, when almost at the top she turned, and was three turnings back toward town before she turned again and slowly retraced her steps.

Strange, too, that the visit to Aunt Emily's farm, to which she always looked forward every year, should suddenly seem unnecessary, and interminable. A whole week! And, my, the time it took her to finish packing that little trunk, though all she had to do was to lay in four freshly ironed dresses. Such terrible home-made looking clothes! With a certain violence, she suddenly took all the books out of the trunk, so that the despicable garments need not be crushed.

For an hour she stood at the window, though Aunt Geneva assured her the taxi wasn't due for full fifty-five minutes. When it finally came, and father and Aunt Geneva bade her have a good time, her smile was as forced as those ancient martyrs who made merry while being boiled in oil. And after she got on the train, she cried.

Those who carp at feminine lack of logic should observe the more reasonable behaviour of the male, Henry. When Ann disappeared round the corner he dashed back into the

garage. After one minute sixteen seconds' intimate association with soap-suds, he dashed out to his car and immediately smudged his hands getting screw-driver and pliers out of the tool-box.

There was nothing to prevent the lordly young man, who had driven into Brentown but an hour ago, from standing cool and clean in the doorway waiting for a pretty girl to repass the garage. Indeed, he had done just that little thing many a time, and had enjoyed being kidded about the peach.

But the lordly young man had vanished. Though he looked no different to the envious eyes of the boy who tended the petrol tank, the resplendent tweeds now clothed a humble, despairing wretch who felt that he dare not profane a vision by being seen watching for her, and who would have knocked down any man who referred to her as a peach.

Doggedly he worked in the hot sun, attacking bolts that couldn't be made any tighter, and screws that wouldn't turn another millimeter. From time to time Sam Carson commiserated with him upon getting hung up all the afternoon; recommended rolling the car inside; begged to assist Henry in his labours. Sam's offers were of no avail. Henry did not budge until he was sure that Ann could not possibly pass Carson's garage and still catch the five o'clock train.

Then he accomplished his departure with a convincing exhibition of speed. Thirty-five seconds of shouted farewells blended with the roar of the cut-out. He had the car up to sixty by the end of the High Street and skidded the corner as only professionals can. Henry's admirers in the garage doorway presaged that he couldn't help but make Lowestoft by six o'clock.

Out of their sight, Henry kicked off the cut-out and headed for the station. All he wanted from Ann was a glance, if not of approval, of tolerance, merely permission to inhabit territory that brought her within his range of vision. But a hundred yards from the station panic seized him, the panic of a gambler for whom the stakes are so high he dare not risk the chance of loss. Diving down an alley, Henry deserted the car and—hidden in the



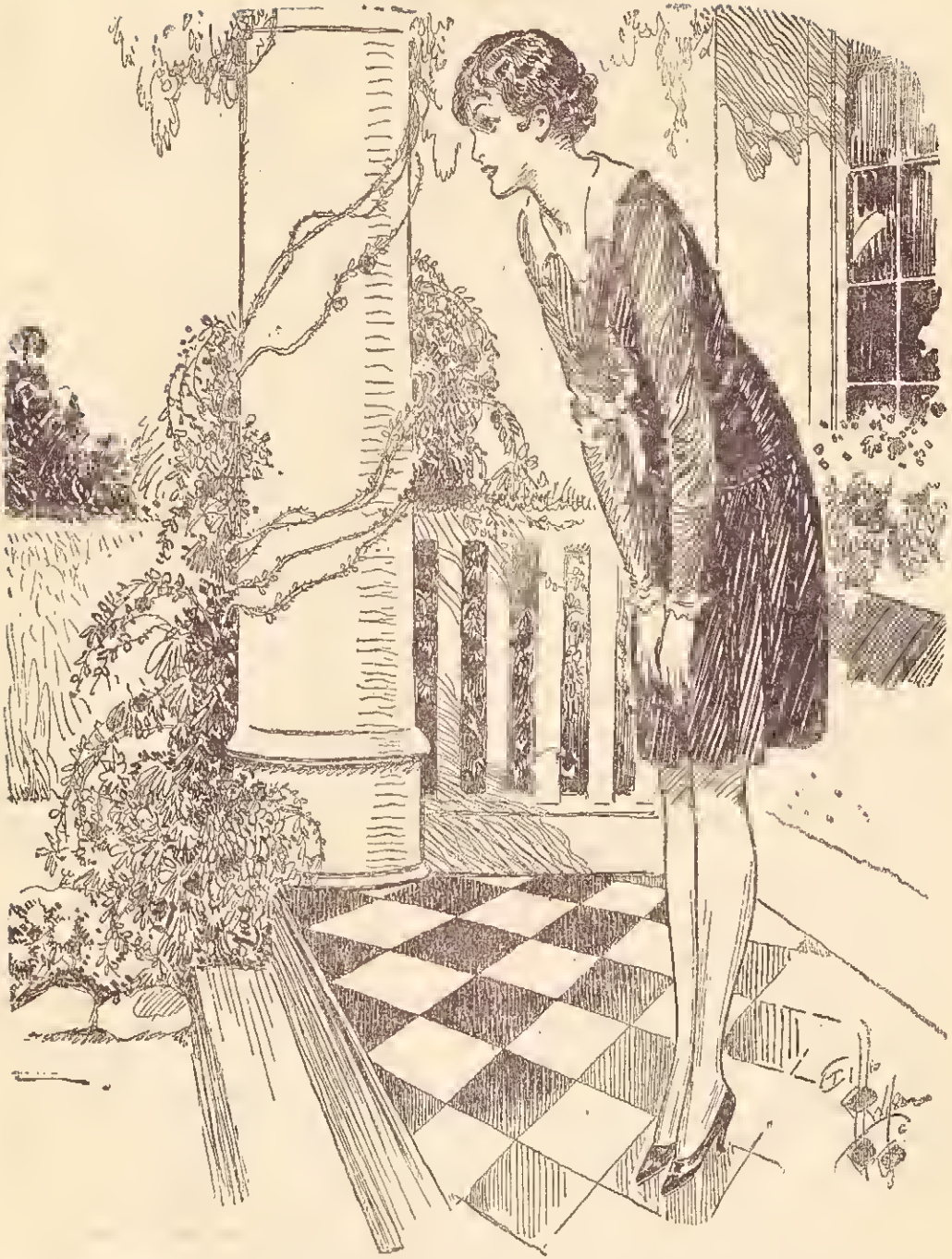
Ann appeared on the porch. "Why, Miss Forrester!" said Henry, with a show of surprise. "Why, Mr. Bryant!" said Ann, and she, too, was terribly surprised.

shadow on the far side of the goods-shed—he mournfully watched Ann get on the train for Belton.

He then turned up the Belton road, beat Ann's train in and, concealed behind a goods-

truck, saw her get off. She was greeted by a plump, red-cheeked woman, who was probably Aunt Emily, and whisked away in an old Ford driven by a boy in overalls.

Instead of asking the station-master Aunt



Emily's last name and where she lived. Henry elaborately inquired the way to the Belton garage, though he had already noted it on his way through town. There, in a rambling conversation, he achieved, after some hours, the information he sought without any direct questions.

Twice he was along the road to Aunt Emily's farm and turned back. The third time he passed it. The house was dark, but his search-light verified the name on the letter-box. At eleven o'clock, supperless, he started for Lowestoft.

By half-past four the next afternoon he

was back in Belton. This time the Dalmartin Six, without hesitation, with, perhaps, a certain desperation, swung off the highway and took the rougher roads with unslackened speed, skimming the hills on high like a thoroughbred hound. It was a crime against magnificent car performance for Henry to apply the brakes when he did.

Jumping out, he unscrewed the radiator cap. A cloud of steam issued forth. Was it possible that he had forgotten to put in water? Nothing for it, he must ask at the nearest house for a hucketful!

As he advanced between the whitewashed stones that marked the path to the front door, Ann appeared on the porch.

"Why, Miss Forrester!" said Henry, with a great show of surprise.

"Why, Mr. Bryant!" said Ann, and she, too, was terribly surprised.

"I—a—run out of water."

The steam, ohligingly ascending heavenward, bore Henry witness.

"I—a——" Ann almost said, "was standing at the window," but she would rather have cut out her tongue than admit that. "I heard you stop all of a sudden."

"Marvellous brakes on these cars," Henry assured her. "Four wheel, internal expanding drums, special Dalmartin fabric lining. I'd like to show—if you could spare the time—that is, right now."

This, Ann understood, was an invitation to go for a ride. Though how could she mistake it with Henry's eyes beseeching, pleading, humbly imploring? And how could Henry think that she wasn't going when Ann's blue eyes gave answer in the sweetest, shyest glance? But he was like a drowning man until he heard her words.

"I can't go far," said Ann, a little breathlessly. "Supper's almost ready. I'd better get my hat." She paused with her hand on the knob of the screen door. "You want a bucket of water, don't you?"

"Seems to have cooled off," said Henry, who felt that the slightest delay was perilous. "I can fill it up when we get back."

After Ann explained to Aunt Emily that it was only Mr. Bryant—everybody knew him

in Brentown—and that, of course, she'd be back for supper, she came out in her old shady hat, and pink chambray dress looking as cool as a dewy tea rose. Henry meshed the gears with his customary velvet touch. But a thermometer under either of their tongues would have registered high fever.

Aunt Emily watched them out of sight, thinking what a good time folks have nowadays. Little could she fathom the misery that can be compressed in half an hour.

Though there was not four inches between them. Henry could not believe that Ann had actually come with him. Ann couldn't believe that Henry actually wanted her in the car. They seemed to have lost the art of speech. Anything they could think of to say seemed far too tame and uninteresting to offer for the consideration of such an extraordinary being as the other.

Henry risked ruining the car, for he had purposely well-nigh drained the radiator. But stopping seemed to involve dire and frightful consequences, as though Ann would utterly disappear if he left her to go into some farmhouse for water. Lest he commit the unpardonable sin of not getting Ann back in time for supper, he kept a hectic eye on the dashboard clock. Ann, noticing this, immediately concluded that he was sorry he had asked her to ride and was anxious to get it over with.

So, as if pursued by demons, they tore through miles of beautiful scenery which neither of them saw. And—though Henry distinctly said that the car wasn't tuned up, but he'd show Ann what it would do if she could possibly spare the time to-morrow, and though Ann distinctly stated that she could spare the time—they parted with the feeling that they had not heard aright and would probably never see each other again.

The next day—

"Oh, how do you do, Mr. Bryant," said Ann, so casually formal that no one could suspect her of actually wanting to see him. She had been teased by Aunt Emily and her cousins. And she knew they were all listening at the window.

"When we get back, Aunt Emily would be

glad if you will stay for supper," she continued, issuing Aunt Emily's friendly invitation quite unwillingly. Henry, Ann felt, was used to far more pretentious affairs than a farmhouse supper. She was terrified, too, that her cousins might continue their jokes in his presence.

"I have a dinner engagement with one of the Dalmartin dealers," Henry said, speaking not one word of truth. He could see Aunt Emily inspecting him through the lace curtains. And in a chill of fear he hurried Ann to the car before this sharp-eyed relative could have time to note all his unworthiness. The afternoon netted forty miles of desperate efforts at conversation.

And thus it went through a whole week of increasing torture.

Ann cried every night because she was such an ordinary looking person, and had such terrible clothes, and hadn't ever been anywhere, and couldn't talk about anything.

Henry became worn and haggard as the mileage on his speedometer piled up, driving to Lowestoft each night, covering the towns in that vicinity each morning on business and returning to Belton by mid-afternoon. He could have had a few days' holiday for the asking. Or he could have invented excuses that he had to take down the engine, that he was going fishing with a customer who might be important. But his imagination endowed the Dalmartin company with the power to see through any subterfuge. At all costs, they must not know. Must not know what? A pretty girl in the car with him was no news, surely.

But, obeying an unreasoning urge for secrecy, he performed prodigies of speed and endurance merely to keep anyone from suspecting that he said, "How do you do, Miss Forrester. Nice day, isn't it?" and that half an hour or so later he heard, "Thank you so much, Mr. Bryant. It was a lovely ride."

True, there was one afternoon when in just another minute they would have been calling each other "Ann" and "Henry." They had stopped for some field flowers because Ann had said, "Oh, aren't they lovely!" and Henry, "Want some?" jam-

ming on the brakes. There were blackberry hrambles to be held aside, low walls for Ann to be helped across, and a little brook with stepping stones.

Constraint seemed to vanish as they wandered in the meadow where the growing things were gently happy in the sunshine. They became natural and at ease as they gathered the white and gold daisies, yarrow with scented leaves, furry spikes of mullen, thistle, and milkweed that must be captured warily.

With laden arms they still lingered, sharing the little excitement of the scene—an ant clinching a blade of grass, a spider escaping by a swiftly spun rope, a humming bee poised over a helated wild rose. Branches of wild honeysuckle they stole from the butterflies and stalks of rose red clover from the bees—the sleek, treasure hoarding honey bees which ancient poets celebrate in many a noble line. As Ann watched an eager roofer hurrowing into the very blossoms in her hand, she commended him with a line from Theacritus.

"What language was that?" asked Henry abruptly.

"Greek," said Ann, abashed at Henry's tone and the look of strange intensity in his eyes.

In a flash the sense of happy intimacy was gone.

"He must think I'm crazy," Ann told herself. "People don't go around quoting things every minute like father."

And she bemoaned her life in the narrow confines of a little university town, her lack of social experience in the great outside world from which Henry came.

How could she know that her chance words came as an interdiction, a reminder that she was a being from that magic sphere which had been denied to Henry, the thought of which, now a thousandfold, plunged him in the depths of despair? How could Ann know her loveliness so comparable with her burden of flowers—the sweet gravity of her eyes, the sunset flush on her cheeks, the rosy freshness of her lips.

Because Henry so longed to take her in his

arms, he guided her across the low wall with distant courtesy. Because Ann so rejoiced in his touch, she quickly drew her unwanted hand from his lest it betray her. So deep was their humility and so high their pride that they held themselves stiffly apart.

That night, when the rest of the house slept, Ann stared up into the dark with tear-flooded eyes, and wished she were dead. And Henry drove his car with savage ferocity, wondering whether he could make a good, clean smash of it if he headed straight for a tree.

With aching heads on the morrow they started for Brentown, site of the East Anglican University. Ann was going home. Henry, by his own request, was taking her thither. The end of the week had come, the end of Ann's visit to Aunt Emily, the end, obviously, of everything.

With concentrated speed and directness, Henry drove to his doom. He feared Professor Forrester; that mild, impractical scholar seemed to him, not an ogre, but a cold, justifiable off-with-his-head kind of judge. He feared the professor's house; its very walls would proclaim him as an alien. He feared Aunt Geneva; she, clearly, showed herself to be in league with Aunt Emily against him. Aunt Geneva had invited him to tea.

A letter Ann had received only that morning bade her be sure to ask Mr. Bryant to stop for tea after their long ride. Timidly Ann made the suggestion, explaining that while her father always had Sunday teas during the regular university term for his students, this would be a much nicer tea than usual. Aunt Geneva had written that some of the summer school faculty would be present.

Engrossed with this added horror, Henry gave undivided attention to the road. Ann stared fixedly at the scenery to keep from

crying. Plainly enough, the best she had to offer, a faculty tea, was of no interest to Henry.

Side by side, impersonal as strangers in the enforced companionship of a train, they completed the ghastly journey. Ann, with a



brave show of indifference, led the way up the pansy-bordered walk. Henry quite as nonchalantly held open the low porch-door that would soon be closed to him for ever. With Spartan heroism they entered the living room.

Lined from floor to ceiling with books, it

had the mellow charm, ease, and usage. Professor Forrester, thin and stooped, was distinguished by that look of other worldliness which marks the scholar. The group of men to whom Henry was introduced were all "professors" or "dons."

his shirt. She sank on a low stool near her father, leaving the remaining rocking-chair for Henry.

Picture, if you can, Daniel in the lion's den in a rocking-chair! That was Henry, endeavouring to appear at ease with the lions—no, the professors, of course—who tried politely to include him in their conversation. It was the shop talk of scholars, talk of books. A recent analysis of Confucius by a Frenchman. A new Swedish survey of philosophy. A treatise on ancient industries by a German colleague whose deductions called forth a counterflood of references, long citations in Greek and Latin. And in Sanskrit!

Henry, avoiding the glances that invited him to participate in rending this author limb from limb, listened in defenceless silence.

Ann, too, was silent, feeling herself trapped by things with which she had no concern. These trivialities of times long past—how had she even thought they mattered? Quibbles about dead words, dead customs, people who had been dead these many hundred years. Her father and his friends she saw now, for the first time, with the eyes of the undergraduates who called them "old fossils." Ann had



Ann saw only the shabby rug, threadbare and faded; the miscellany of worn chairs; her father's thin locks awry; and that Albert, the professor's assistant, had not—failing the reminders of his wife who was away visiting his mother—remembered to change

Because Henry so longed to take her in his arms, he guided Ann across the low wall with distant courtesy.

always felt superior to that crowd. But they were right. *They* lived in the *present*. And she might have learned from them—learned how to dress, to be attractive, and to talk of something of interest to a man of the world like Henry. Now, alas! it was too late. Henry looked bored to extinction. He had not said a word.

What could Henry say? Apropos of a new history of trade and colonisation by some hyphenated professor he could scarcely remark that it was a nice day. Yet those fiendish professors kept turning to him oftener and oftener as they disagreed with each other about the average Englishman's ideas on Roman colonisation. The two right and left of Henry fought a battle almost in his lap, both fairly yammering at him to confirm arguments which the other wouldn't admit concerning modern colonising in Africa and South America. Here, at least, were names Henry recognised.

"But the way they jump on that author who must know a little something, what *would* they do to a yellow who knows nothing but the names!"

With despairing eyes he renounced Ann, sitting so coldly aloof—mortified, undoubtedly, at his exhibition of ignorance. And his heart sank lower, if possible, as he heard her crisply supply her father with a date he asked her help in recalling.

"Good-bye, Miss Forrester, good-bye. I will never forget you."

But those weren't the words he was saying. For suddenly he found himself speaking. Yes, talking right out with assurance and authority! Dominating the conversation!

The discussion had veered to early fortifications of the eastern counties and the mingled races of our ancestry—English, Welsh, Danes—even Germans.

"There were early evidences of bi-racial characteristics in the sixteenth century rebellions," said Professor Forrester. "I forget the year."

"Sixteen-thirty-nine," Henry heard himself announcing. He could see the curve in the road and the great signboard with its black and red letters standing before him.

"You are now two miles from Brentown, site of the University of East Anglia. The town was fortified in sixteen-thirty-nine by a band of rebels led by Giles Watt——" And Henry went on.

Ranging the whole of the eastern counties which he had just travelled, he read towns, dates, and facts from the billboards that flashed in procession through his excited mind. He would have gone on indefinitely, not knowing how to stop, had not Aunt Geneva entered through a door near him with a laden tea-tray.

Henry sprang up gallantly and took it from her. And there was a general stir to proffer chairs and to arrange the tea-table in Aunt Geneva's preferred corner.

"I envy you your retentive memory for dates," Professor Forrester told Henry, "They usually escape me."

"You specialise in English history?" asked Professor Hampton.

"No," said Henry truthfully, yet fully aware he was heightening his triumph.

Carefully he placed the tea-tray before Aunt Geneva, who thanked him with her placid, kindly smile.

Then quickly he crossed the room to Ann. She stood in a corner folding the cover which adorned the tea-table when not in hospitable use. Quickly, quickly, for there was not a moment to lose, Henry bent down and spoke low in her ear.

"Will you marry me?" he said.

Ann looked up at him, astonished, unbelieving.

"If—if you want me to," she faltered, her blue eyes searching his face.

"No, no. You mustn't!" said Henry.

He couldn't trick those trusting eyes with a bluff. He wasn't Ann's sort. He wasn't good enough for her. He couldn't let her make such an awful mistake.

"I—I've got to tell you the truth. I've got to explain."

He pulled Ann toward the door, the table cover trailing between them, and down the porch steps to the car.

Though his hand was tight on Ann's wrist, she thought he was going to leave her.

"Don't go away," she sobbed softly.
"Oh, don't go away!"

Aunt Geneva peered out of the window. And, seeing them get in the car, she came out on the porch.

"Aren't you going to have your tea?" she called.

But the Dalmartin six carried them gallantly out of danger.

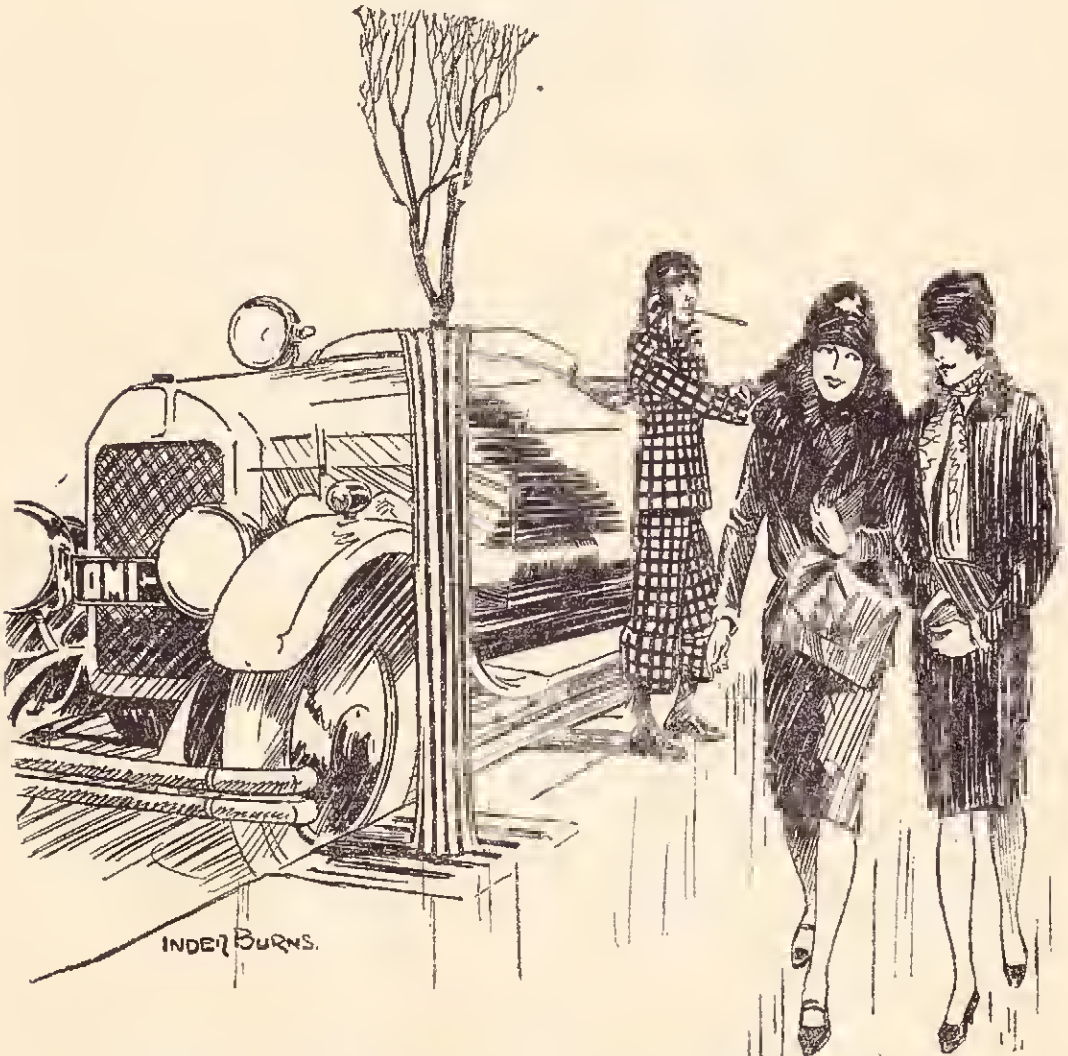
Past mocking university buildings. Past houses with prying eyes. To a tree-sheltered road in the woods.

There Ann and Henry discovered that the terrible, perilous week was indeed over. They had lived through desperate days and through nights of despair. They had overcome insurmountable obstacles, had foiled stratagems and plots.

At last they were safe—close in each other's arms.

True love, as is well known, conquers all. Well, well!

THE END.



JOY: "THAT'S MONTY ALL DRESSED UP TO KILL."

A Clown in Mufti

By NELSON JACKSON

(The well-known and witty entertainer at the piano.)

I OFTEN look back and think what a glorious group of performers were the artists who composed the Carl Rosa company. I have had the honour of appearing at concerts with such stars of the Rosa Company as Marie Rozc, Georgina Burns, Barton McGuckin, Leslie Crotty, Alec Marsh, and Lempriere Pringle. All great artists and great Bohemians. Among the stars of a former era with whom the writer has been associated on the concert stage were Signor Foli the glorious basso. (His real name was Foley, and he came from Cork.) Also Sir Charles Santley, Mesdames Belle Cole and Albani, Zélie de Lussan, and that superb baritone William Ludwig. (He also came from Ireland, and his real name was, I believe, Ledwich.) I also toured with the original Meister Glee Singers. They may have been excelled since (which I doubt), but they were quite in a class of their own in those days. And I had the proud distinction of appearing with Dame Clara Butt when she was a slim slip of a girl. She is greater in every way now, but is still the same very charming woman. Well—well—those were great days.

Just after the last Boer War, I made a single-handed tour of the four colonies of South Africa, doing a show lasting two and a quarter hours. I had four different programmes of this length without repeating an item. All I required was a platform and a piano. People loved a one-man show those days. They don't now—worse luck. I am a peaceful and law-abiding citizen. I don't state this as a merit, but as a fact. Also, it is quite hereditary, and so I cannot help it. I just wanted to stop in England and abide by the law. I loathe travelling. Scenery and cathedrals are thrown away on me. I have never climbed a mountain, and have no

intention of doing so. I am easy-going by nature. London with its sights, sounds, and smells is good enough for me. I regard all other places as suburbs. Therefore, to go on tour in South Africa was a monumental exertion for me to undertake. I did not want to go to South Africa, and said so repeatedly. But kind and misguided friends insisted that it was a land flowing with milk and honey. They told me that there were crocks of gold to be had for the mere picking up. So I went. I sailed in one of the Union Castle boats. I will not name it, as I do not wish to make the other boats jealous. Let me warn the intending exile never to be lured on to the "Entertainments Committee" of a liner en route to anywhere. Believe me, it's a mug's game. It is a game for good-natured idiots of which I am a gold medallist. From the second day of the voyage, I can honestly say I never had a moment's peace. I was elected entertainments manager with full powers. This meant that I was to do all the dirty work and the committee were to get all the credit. The talent available on board was of the most limited dimensions. Several people were not only willing but anxious to do their worst to amuse. And they did it. We had one performer from dear old Bermondsey (and the steerage) who recited reels and reels of Shakespeare. His greatest effort was from "King John." It was thrilling to hear the musical accents of Bermondsey declaiming, "Eat me these hyons 'ot." There were those who sang comic songs of the questionable type to vamped accompaniments, and some of the vamping effects were weird in the extreme. We had a passionate baritone who trilled the songs of Frank Lambert and Guy d'Hardelot. Those syrupy, meaningless, hot-pressed little lyrics ending

on the dominant seventh. He usually cracked on the dominant which relieved the tension somewhat. Altogether, the concerts were a failure for which I was, of course, blamed. They were not even bad enough to be good, if you understand what I mean. Then, again (as the parsons say) I was dragged into all the idiotic deck games that passengers are supposed to enjoy. I was skelped hip and thigh with hard coir-yarn cricket balls. I was trussed up to undergo that horrible form of torture known as cock-fighting. I was biffed off booms with bolsters, banged on the bald spot with sandbags in the peculiarly devilish game called "are you there?" I always was. The inventor of this pastime deserves a special oven in the future life. I repeat that those who join the "Entertainment Committee" on any liner bound for anywhere are simply asking for it. However, a voyage, whatever its length, comes to an end at last, and I received one tribute at least from an approving soul. It appeared in the "Journal" which was printed and published on board. It was in what purported to be verse. I append the lines exactly as they appeared. There is a rugged virility about

the workmanship which appeals. Also, the metre is a little unusual.

ODE TO NELSON JACKSON, ESQ.

Mr. Nelson Jackson is a smart young man.
His coon songs, etc., were cleverly sang.
The recitals of Jackson were the best on the list,
And I know that he'd beat Hamlet right into fits.

Now this gentleman Jackson's been the life of the ship.
If it had not been for him we should all have been asleep.
So with three hearty cheers we'll cheer him to-night,
And thank him sincerely for his coon songs so bright.

There it is exactly as it appeared, As the Americans say, "can you beat it?" The reference to Hamlet is cryptic, and I never sang a coon song in my life. I'll tell you more about South Africa next month, the Editor permitting.

(We'll think it over.—EDITOR.)

CHOICE

When I see Dilys cross the street
With eager hast'ning little feet,
I think life's sun would brighter shine
If darling Dilys could be mine.

When I see sweet Clarissa row,
I think life's biggest thrill I'd know
If we for ever in a boat
A-down life's placid stream could float.

When I watch Phœbe charleston round,
I think no greater bliss be found,
Than having her, with all her charms,
For ever dancing in my arms.

But I'm an ordinary man
Who wants the best from life he can,
And so I give my heart to Rose,
Who smiles, *and* cooks, *and* mends my clothes!

HEATHER GWYNNE.

72 This month's American story by an American author. Unusual in tone,
and alive with the spirit of laughter and youth.

Keep Your Eye on the BALL

By
William
Almon
WOLFF



mean a row later; and she wasn't, she thought, up to facing even the prospect of a row.

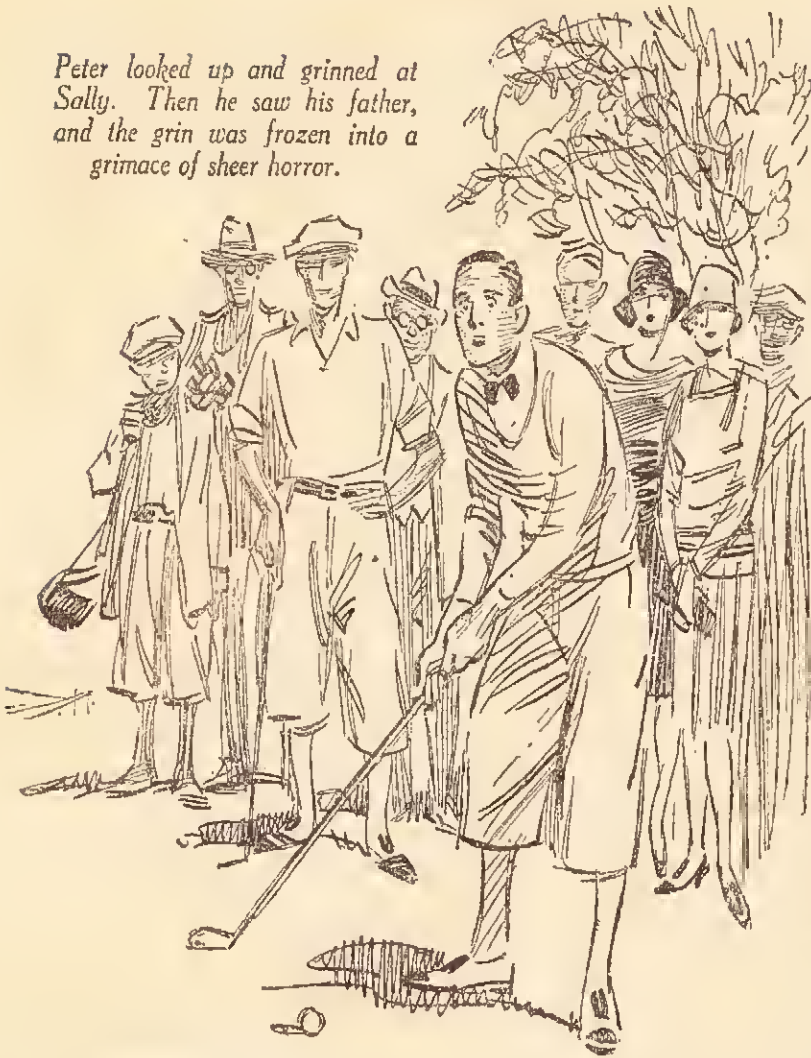
She was licked. This party, somehow, had beaten her. She loathed it, but its ironic contrast to the way she'd been living for the last year, and seemed likely to have to keep on living, had been too much for her. She'd managed to get away for a few minutes, and she sat and smoked a cigarette on a bench hidden away in a clump of white birches from which she

SALLY HUSTON wanted to go home, but she couldn't. Not possibly. Not for hours yet. Not unless she walked to the station, five miles away. And even if she grew desperate enough to do that, it would

could keep an eye on things with a fair chance of not being seen herself until she was rested.

Sally didn't like her aunt, but she had to admit that this was a good show. There'd

Peter looked up and grinned at Sally. Then he saw his father, and the grin was frozen into a grimace of sheer horror.



been a perfectly marvellous lunch out of doors, and people were wandering around now, waiting for the golf to begin, looking the place over.

Hordes of nice people, beautifully dressed, gay and cheerful, vivid, colourful. Half a mile of Westchester real estate, with a stone wall around it, worth incalculable sums in terms of building lots. Eighteen of Mr. Devereux Emmett's very choicest holes for a private golf course, with greens gleaming like emeralds and traps full of sea sand as white as snow, brought in lighters and trucks from Long Island, and hang the expense! And the house rising above the trees, grey stone, looking really, Sally was obliged to

contess, like the French château its architect had copied.

"Listen——"

Sally turned with a start. There was a young man. She hadn't heard him come up. He looked worried, but very nice, Sally thought. She didn't know him, which was, that day, a point very much in his favour. She smiled at him before she quite knew she was doing it.

"Hallo!" said Sally.

"Hallo!" he said, seemingly relieved, "Look here, tell me—who's giving this party, and why?"

"But, good grief, don't you know?" she said.

"Would I be asking you if I did? Be yourself, lady; there's no time to be lost, tell me."

"Oh," said Sally,

"it's my aunt. At least, she's not really my aunt. She's my real aunt's husband's second wife."

"I see," he said, "quite. But do you mind if we go into that some other time? About how many wives your uncle had, I mean? What's the woman's name, and why is she giving this show?"

"Because she wanted to, I suppose," said Sally.

"I wish you'd stop trying to be funny," the young man said crossly. "Haven't you any concentration at all? Keep your eye on the ball! What's her name, and is this a garden-party, or is Lindbergh going to fly over, or what?"

"Oh, now I see what you mean," said Sally. "My aunt's name is Mrs. Madden, and it's just a party to celebrate this new golf course. They're going to have mixed four-somes——"

"My heavens!" said the young man.

Sally thought he'd have turned pale if he hadn't been too sunburned to make that practicable.

"And, you see, her daughter—her step-daughter, I mean, my cousin——"

"You know," he said, "I think your family tree's extraordinarily interesting and all that; but that's not the point just now, is it? Madden, eh? Mrs. Madden. What's she wearing? How do I know her when I see her?"

"Bl-black and white voile!" Sally gasped. "A large white hat."

"Good! Tall, short, thin, fat?"

"In between," said Sally. "Quite—quite nice-looking; her hair's white."

"Good!" said the young man. "You see, if you just concentrate, you're all right." And off he rushed.

Sally arose and followed him. She didn't want to go home any more, not until she found out what this young man wanted.

In a minute she found out. Her aunt was introducing him to Marjorie Romer, and the young man who'd been with Marjorie, looking incredulous but happy, was fading away swiftly in the direction of a debutante who had five men already, but was perfectly capable of haudling another.

"Well——" said Sally to herself; then she smiled wickedly.

All that simply because he had wanted to meet Marjorie!

Wild horses couldn't have dragged Sally away now. Her behaviour was entirely shameless. Deliberately she watched the two of them. The young man started in to talk to Marjorie breathlessly, but he didn't get very far. Before long it was Marjorie who talked. Sally saw varying expressions come and go in the young man's eyes—doubt, curiosity, suspicion, desperation. Sally bided her time. At what seemed to her the right moment, she struck. All she did was wander

into the line of the young man's vision. She wanted to see what would happen.

She did. He saw her, looked at her; looked at her again to make sure. Then he turned and paid concentrated attention to Marjorie. Ruthlessly, at what, Sally was sure, was his first chance, he broke in, accompanying his words with a wide, free gesture. Then he bowed and turned away, and came straight to Sally.

"Hallo!" he said. "Wondering where you were, I was." He took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead. "My good gosh, I ought to have known there'd be a catch! But how can you tell that a girl who looks like that's going to talk like someone reading a guide book out loud? Anything you'd like to know about the English lakes or the château country in France?"

"No, thanks," said Sally. "But, please, I'd love to know the plot."

"Plot?" he said. "Plot?" Then he smiled a slow smile that grew into a grin. "Oh, well! Driving along, just so-so. Got held up somewhere. That girl in the next car—with a man. Fell for her. Fell hard. Turned in here, after them—saw it was a party, you see. Came in. Thought there'd be someone I knew. Never saw so many people I didn't know all at one time."

Sally just listened.

"Barged around. Beginning to feel nervous. Tried to make this girl. Thought she gave me a glass eye. Tried to spot hostess. No go. Lots of old girls looked as if they might be hostesses. You know."

Sally did.

"It's not funny," he complained. "That's your trouble, though. No seriousness of purpose. Chap can't count on you. Got to know hostess' name if you're crashing the gate at a party, haven't you?"

"I—I suppose it is a help!" said Sally.

"Of course. Elementary, that is. Come on. Let's go."

"Go?" said Sally, startled. "Go where?"

"I don't care!" he said. "Away. That's all. You——" He looked alarmed. "You don't live here, do you?"

"No," she said. "I live in New York."

"Good," he said. "So do I. Drive you down. Have dinner somewhere."

"Oh, I oughtn't—all right—let's!" said Sally.

Why not? If she didn't go now she'd have to wait around for hours before they sent her to the station, and the train would be crowded, and what good did it do her, anyway, to keep in the good graces of an aunt who wasn't really an aunt at all?

Driving down with Peter—she found out, quite soon, that his name was Peter Armstrong—was fun.

"Where were you going, originally?" she asked him.

"Oh, just to play golf—it didn't matter," he said. "You wouldn't have been there, anyway."

Everything was all right until late, when he began talking about the future.

"To-morrow's out," he said gloomily. "Engagement I can't break. Silly, but there it is. Monday, though. That's another day. Lunch—d'you mind having it early, about one? And dinner rather late, and we'll do a musical show, so we can miss all we like of the first act. And then we can start seeing if any of the night clubs are any good this summer—you know, find out where they have music we both like—darned important, that is—"

"Stop!" she said. "I can't have lunch at all on Monday, and I oughtn't to go out that night—except—well, dinner perhaps, if I go home right away afterwards. I have to get some sleep week nights. I work."

"Work?" he said, shocked and annoyed. "Why bring that up? So do I work. That's why I said an early lunch; I have to beat the old man back to the office."

"You don't have to work the way I do," she said viciously. "You don't have to take dictation all morning and type letters all afternoon, and then stay around for hours typing half of them over again because you've made so many mistakes."

"Maybe," he said. "But the worst they can do to you is fire you."

"Well, you can't even be fired!"

"You'd be surprised. You don't know the male parent. A hard-boiled egg if the cook

ever forgot to turn the gas off under one! Fired! I'll say I can be fired. And if I am I get cut off with a dollar, too! Laugh that off." His voice was increasingly bitter. "Know the fast one he pulled on me this morning? No more golf!"

"But you were going to play to-day—"

"Oh, I mean real golf. Tournament stuff. Saturday afternoons and Sundays—yes. Says I can't concentrate on business and tournament golf, too!"

SALLY laughed, to his annoyance. She wasn't appalled, as he'd expected her to be.

"I don't see why you had to start talking about work," he said. And, quite soon, he took her home, to the dull, respectable upper West Side block where she shared an apartment with a couple of other girls from the office—which wasn't where she'd been brought up, by any means, in the days before her father had died suddenly, without leaving any money, and her aunt had made her uncle do the right thing by her in the way of a secretarial course. Peter got out with her, and they stood and looked at one another.

"Well," said Sally. "Good night, Mr. Armstrong."

"Peter," he said absently. "Oh, hang!"

"What's the matter with you, I'd like to know?" she said crossly.

"I'm just trying to think," he said. "It's so mixed up—"

"I don't see—"

"Oh, hush, of course you don't!" said Peter. "Can't you take my word for it? If I tried to explain—" He shook his head. "No use. Have to wait."

She stared at him, mystified. And then he did what absolutely nothing he'd said or done all day had warned her to expect. He grabbed her suddenly and kissed her, most unskillfully, somewhere under the left eye, and then let her go.

"You just leave it to me," he said. "It'll come out all right. Good-night!"

And before she could catch her breath, much less say anything, he was in the car and going off.

"Well!" said Sally, as she let herself in. "What a day!" Sally, considering the times she lived in, hadn't been kissed much. And now she'd been kissed twice in one day.

Twice—yes. The first kiss hasn't come up before, but it had happened, even though subsequent events had rather banished the memory of it from Sally's mind, until the last event of all recalled it sharply.

Peter's kiss meant nothing; Sally knew that. Arthur Butler's kiss, though, which had occurred much earlier in the day, in the taxi in which he'd taken her to the station, had been different. It had meant nothing to Sally, but a lot to Arthur. Arthur was not one of your light and casual kissers, as Peter probably was. But what was she to do?

Sunday was a blank, mercifully. But Monday, at the office, was terrible. Sally's head ached, and she'd forgotten what little she had ever known about a typewriter, and her spelling, always original, became grotesque. Arthur wanted her to have lunch, and she wouldn't, and then he called up again. Not to ask her to dinner, but just to say he'd broken an engagement so that they could dine together; a command, not an invitation. She said she couldn't, and he hung up ominously, and when she started home, well after six, he was waiting for her downstairs.

"You're late," he said.

"Do you suppose I don't know it?" Was Peter coming to take her to dinner or wasn't he? She hadn't heard a word from him. "Arthur—"

"Yes?"

"You know everything. Is there a golf player called Armstrong? A—a well-known one, I mean?"

"Peter Armstrong? Of course. Plays for Baltamis. Be pretty good if he'd take the game seriously. Doesn't concentrate. Lasted to the semi-final in the amateur last year, though, at that."

"Oh!" said Sally.

"Why can't you have dinner with me?"

"I'm going out."

"With a man?"

"I don't know."

"Sally, don't equivocate! Of course you know!"

Then she got a respite while he selected a taxi, something he always did with care. There was this about Arthur, though; he could afford to take a girl home to South Brooklyn, even in a taxi, to say nothing of the upper West Side.

"Sally," he said gravely, when they were in the cab. "I don't want to press you, but, after all, now that we're engaged——"

"Engaged!" she said, with a start.

"Of course!" he said. "After what happened Saturday——"

She racked her aching head. Yes. He'd kissed her, just as they reached the station, and she'd run for her train, then, while he paid off the cab.

"But——" she began.

Then she stopped. She couldn't think of any tactfully kind way to tell him that she'd have let almost any man kiss her Saturday noon, the way she was feeling, rather than get into an argument. So she just closed her eyes and leaned back, and Arthur was chivalrously silent and let her rest.

She saw Peter, sitting in another taxi, as they drove up to her house, and he must have seen her, too, and the way Arthur kissed her good-bye. He waited till Arthur had gone off, and then followed her into her vestibule.

"Hallo!" he said. "Couldn't remember any of your name except Sally. Had to come around and catch you going in. Rotten hours you keep. Lit out early to be here by a quarter to five. The old man'll think that shows lack of concentration—that's all he knows."

"You lack something, all right," said Sally. "I told you my name and the telephone and everything."

"I know, I know," he said. "Concentrating on something else, that's why I forgot. Do I come up or wait in the cab. Nice cab. Little bare, though, as a home. I was thinking of putting up a few good etchings."

"Oh, you might as well come up!" said Sally. What difference did it make? A lot, as it turned out. The other girls were out, and Peter, when they got upstairs, proved that when he was putting his mind to it he was a perfectly adequate kisser. Sally was tired, and her head still ached, and she liked having Peter kiss her, and why not be hung for a sheep, when it came to that?

"Who was that other bloke?" Peter asked presently.

"He?" said Sally. She braced herself. "Oh, just the man I'm engaged to!"

"No!" said Peter. He began to laugh. He roared. "Oh, that's priceless! It's great. That makes it all right."

He kissed her again. But she had to draw a line somewhere.

"Don't, Peter——" she said.

"Why not?"

"You can't—when I'm engaged and you know it——"

"Can't see it," said Peter. "Did I kick and scream when he kissed you downstairs?"

And you're only engaged to him, but you're going to marry me."

"What?" said Sally.

He nodded vigorously.

"Of course! Didn't you know that Saturday night? I did."

He took her to a place she liked and did the ordering, and they had all the things

she most loved to eat. Arthur always took her to the sort of hotel your provincial aunt stays at when visiting town, and she had to order for herself, because Arthur ran to nourishing broths and chops and plain green vegetables—spinach, for choice.

"Everything all right?" said Peter. She just looked at him. "Good. Now—how

about being engaged? Why, how, when, all that?"

When he finally believed her he laughed.

"Oh, well," he said, "if that's all! If a chap's cool enough to think a girl's going to marry him just because he's kissed her——"

"But—you seem to think that yourself——"

"That's different," he said sternly. "And, anyway, it's the other way round. I didn't think you were going to marry me because I kissed you—I kissed you because I knew you were going to marry me."

Coffee. Cigarettes. No one left, except waiters, discreetly remote.

"Now, let's see," said Peter, frowning. "I ought to get a cable to-morrow. Wish I knew if the old man's really going to Boston Wednesday!"

"Peter, how do you expect me to know what you're talking about?"



He kissed her heartily, but unsuccessfully, somewhere in the region of the left eye.

"It's simple enough," he said. "You'll see. It'll work out, one way or another. Leave it to me."

All day Tuesday there wasn't a word from Peter. Plenty from Arthur, though. And he made the mistake of turning up at the flat about seven—and she thought, when she heard the hell, it was Peter.

That was the end, for Arthur. Sally told him as much of the truth as he could take in, and it was enough. He walked out of her life, and she was glad of it. Then she sat up till midnight, waiting to hear from Peter, but she never did.

Wednesday morning it was her turn to be up and dressed early and get coffee and rolls for breakfast. While she was doing that the bell rang, and this time it was Peter. In plus fours and a cap.

"Hallo!" he said. "The old man went to Boston all right." He frowned. "That dress won't do. Put on what you were wearing Saturday."

"To go to the office? I won't! Peter, you are crazy!"

"Office? Oh, you're not going to the office! Not to-day. Tell them you're ill. Car's downstairs. We're going out to Baltamis. Breakfast on the way."

She looked at him. Oh, what did anything matter? They were going to fire her on Saturday, anyway—they were sure to.

Peter and Sally had breakfast at the Claremont, looking out over a misty river to the Palisades.

"Team match this afternoon, you see," he said. "Got to play. The old man's all wet. Need me—lots of bets on the darned match. Got to give the hoy friends a run for their money. He won't know—the old man, being in Boston. And they're going to telephone the cable from the office as soon as it comes."

She'd stopped expecting anything Peter said to make sense.

It was still early when they got to the club, and lunch on the clubhouse porch was nice. People were drifting in.

"Be quite a crowd," Peter explained. "Nothing in the papers, though. Sort of party we have every year with this Hillway

gang. Lots of malefactors of great wealth here—up there, too. Bet their fool heads off on this match. Silly, if you ask me. Game's too much fun to mix it up with gambling. Funny about the old man; he bets as much as any of them. But it'd be the gate for me if he knew I was playing."

"Why take a chance, then, Peter?" said Sally.

"Oh, I don't know! Sort of up to me. Counting on me. I'm not so hot now—haven't been playing enough. No one else Carson couldn't eat for breakfast, though. Can't let the hoy friends down."

Sally was furious when she saw that most of the crowd didn't mean to wait for Peter and his opponent, Carson, who were the last to start. The first match got the gallery—reasonably enough, because the metropolitan champion was playing for Baltamis, and a man who'd been runner-up twice in the Amateur was against him from Hillway. Only about half a dozen people made up the gallery for Peter and Carson. But she heard one of them say the crowd would be around for the finish all right, because this was the match that would settle things—if form meant anything the other six twosomes would be split.

Nothing happened till the fourth hole, when Peter finished one up!

No more excitement till the ninth, when Peter was in trouble. He was at the bottom of a deep pit, placed to penalise a sliced second shot. One way out was easy, safe—and costly, for it entailed playing for the back of the green and the practically certain loss of a stroke. Sally and the rest of them stood looking down as Peter studied the lie of his ball in the sand. Straight ahead was the high bank of the pit.

"Gosh!" said a man beside her. "He's going to try it!"

He did. The niblick crashed down; the ball rose, in a cloud of sand. It soared high; cleared the hunker; landed on the green; rolled on and on—until it lay directly between Carson's ball and the hole. Carson was stymied hopelessly; Peter's hole, four to five. Two up at the turn!

He fell back to walk through the woods towards the tenth tee with Sally.

"You're marvellous!" she said.

"You mean I'm shot with luck!" said Peter. "Wait a bit."

He hurried on to drive. Straight down the narrow, tree-lined fairway went his ball; Sally, vaguely conscious of a man who had fallen into step beside her, turned, with glowing cheeks.

"Wasn't that a splendid drive?" she said.

The man was elderly and safe, and Sally'd been quiet too long.

"Eh?" he said. "Oh, yes! Yes, indeed." He laughed harshly. "Good thing the boy can do something well. Maybe he can turn pro. to make a living."

Suspicion stirred suddenly in Sally's mind. She looked at this man again. Eyes—no. Nose—yes. Mouth and chin—oh, yes! He couldn't be, though.

"You——" she said. "Oh, my soul—you're not—you can't be Peter's father!"

"Why not, I'd like to know?" said Mr. Armstrong.

For that was exactly who he was.

"Because—oh, because you went to Boston, for one thing!"

"H'mph!" said Mr. Armstrong. "But I didn't, you see. Luckily. Know the young idiot, do you?"

"Yes—yes, I do," said Sally. "Mr. Armstrong——"

"You have my sympathy," he said.

"Wait," she said. "Please—couldn't we stay back a little, so that Peter won't see you? It'd be such a shock——"

"I thought of that myself," said Mr. Armstrong grimly.

And increased his pace. Sally kept up with him; she wondered what would happen if she put out her foot and tripped him. They came to the green; there were more people now. Carson putted from a corner; lay dead for a five. Peter had a four-footer for the half. He looked over, saw Sally, and grinned. Then, as he was about to turn and address the ball, he saw his father. The grin was frozen into a grimace of sheer horror. For a moment he just stared. Then he missed his

putt. Carson's hole; Peter was only one up.

"Grr!" said Mr. Armstrong. "You see? No concentration! Yellow, that's what he is!"

"He is not!" said Sally furiously.

The eleventh was a nightmare. Peter drove out of bounds—something he probably did once every two years. He pulled his second drive into the rough; picked up, having played six, in a trap. The match was square.

Carson won the twelfth, though Peter pulled himself together and stayed on the course, ruining himself, this time, with three putts.

"What do you think now?" said Mr. Armstrong grimly. "I might overlook his sneaking off because he thought I was in Boston, but seeing him quit——"

He ended with inarticulate growls. Sally was shaken herself. All her sympathy went to Peter—but, oh, he oughtn't just to let go like this!

He was trying to look as if everything were all right, as if this were just what might happen to anyone. But he didn't fool Sally; his eyes gave him away. He loathed himself for being rattled, for the way he'd lost his grip. He knew right enough. Keep your eye on the ball—the way he'd said that to her, over and over! But he—why, it was just because he didn't, because he lifted his head as he took an easy iron shot, that he lost the thirteenth hole—to make Carson two up and only five to go.

On the fourteenth Peter over-approached, and the gallery, shocked and incredulous—it had grown to respectable proportions now—saw Carson sink his putt to win the fifth hole in succession—and to be three up, with four to play!

"Well!" said Mr. Armstrong, in Sally's ear. "What do you think of him now?"

Sally wished she had something to hit him with.

"I'll tell you!" she said. "I think he'll win. I'll bet you he will. I'll bet you ten dollars!"

She did have ten dollars—and about fifty cents more. And no job. At least, if she still had a job the age of miracles wasn't past.

"Ho!" said Mr. Armstrong. "You need a lesson. I'll take that bet, young lady—only I'll give you ten to one."

"No," said Sally. "You won't! I ought to give you odds——"

Peter's father stared at her curiously. She didn't care what he thought.

"All right," he said, and his voice, somehow, was pleasanter. "Even money, then."

He held out his hand, and, reluctantly, Sally shook it.

Peter didn't lose the next hole. But he didn't win it, either. He couldn't very well, because though he played it perfectly, so did Carson. And now Carson was dormie—three up, three to go.

They had to walk through the woods from the fifteenth green to the next tee, and Sally called to Peter, walking along, his head down, a little ahead. He turned and waited.

"Fine show you're putting on!" said Mr. Armstrong.

"Sorry, sir. It is pretty sour."

"Peter!" said Sally. "I just bet your father ten dollars you'd win this match. He wanted to bet me ten to one you wouldn't, but I said I ought to give him odds, not take them! Peter!"

He stared at her. And she saw something happen to his eyes, and to his mouth.

"You did," he said. "Sally——"

"Don't say anything," she cried. "But—oh, Peter—just keep your eye on the ball!"

"I—all right, I will," he said. But the way he said it sent queer little thrills running up and down Sally's back. He turned to his father. "Thought you were going to Boston, sir? Change your mind?"

"They postponed the meeting."

"Were you at the office?" Mr. Armstrong nodded curtly. "Did they happen to say anything about a cable coming for me?"

"Yes," said his father. He took a blue envelope from his pocket. "Want it?"

"I'll say I do!" Peter's eyes were shining. Eagerly he took the envelope, tore it open; then he turned to Sally. "That's that!" he said. "Told you it'd work out all right.

Hallo—got to beat it. Carson's waiting. See you later."

Sally closed her eyes for a second as he hurried off. Peter was back, her own crazy, adorable Peter; this wasn't the Peter who'd gone to pieces when he saw his father. She didn't see him drive, but she heard the cheer that broke out as the ball sailed down the course. And she saw Carson outdriven for the first time since Peter had cracked. Peter won the hole when he reached the green with his brassie and sank a long putt for a birdie. Nothing sensational about that three, coming just then, though, it hordered on the miraculous.

Peter, still two down, had the honour of the next tee. Again he played perfect golf. Carson, unworried, serene, sure of winning, was careful; he took no chances. Peter had to do just the same. His second left him in a tricky spot.

Sally saw him shake his head. He took a deep-bladed mashie; hit deep into the turf. The ball rose high, in a lovely, roaring flight; above the green it seemed to hover for a moment; then dropped, like a hawk about to strike. A shout went up from the crowd: the ball had stuck two feet from the hole and lay there, motionless. Even Sally, no golfer, heaven knew, could appreciate the magic of that shot! Peter's hole again—and Carson was one up with one to go!

"Now!" said Sally to Mr. Armstrong. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Wasn't that glorious?"

"It's not over yet," said Mr. Armstrong.

But every golfer in the gallery who knew the eighteenth hole at Baltamis thought it was, in his heart. For that is a hole offering few opportunities for the sort of golf that was all that could save Peter now. You drive straight out from the eighteenth tee; for your second you have to turn, at right angles, to reach the green, which you can't see from the tee at all, since woods hide it; a strip of maple oak, and beech thirty or forty yards wide, two hundred yards from the tee.

Peter stood on the tee, studying the wind. Then, with a shake of his head, he knelt and built up a high tee of wet sand. Sally saw



He took a ten-dollar bill from his pocket.

"I don't want it," said Sally, but he made her take it.

Carson start as Peter took his stance; she heard a sort of whispered sigh that ran through the crowd. Then Peter drove. Not down the fairway, but straight across the corner of the woods, a screaming drive that rose higher and higher until the ball began to fall and the high trees hid it.

"By Jimmy, I think you made it!" cried Carson, in high and chivalrous excitement. And Peter had. He had risked utter disaster should his ball fail to clear the woods; he had taken the one chance in a hundred that had remained to him, since Carson, playing safe, was morally sure of victory. When, after

Carson had made his clean, orthodox drive, the first of the gallery went running down, a great cry came back. Peter's ball was in the open, thirty yards short of the green. Carson's, on his second, was only five yards nearer. Peter laid his approach dead; the match was square. And on the first extra hole that was played, Peter won!

"H'mph!" said Peter's father. He looked at Sally curiously again. He took a ten-dollar bill from his pocket. She grew scarlet.

"I—oh, I don't want it!" she said. But he made her take it. Peter saw that; grinned, as he joined them.

"Oh, Peter!" said Sally, and that was all, for the moment, she could manage.

"Sorry I played hooky from the office, sir," said Peter. "I—I'm rather glad you caught me out, though."

"I—I wouldn't have missed seeing those last three holes for a thousand dollars!" said his father. "Anyone who can pull himself together the way you did after quitting cold—"

"That wasn't so good," said Peter. "Couldn't seem to co-ordinate, for a minute or two." He hesitated. "Going back to town, sir? I can drive you in. Won't be keeping the car much longer, I suppose."

"No?" said Mr. Armstrong.

"Not if I'm fired."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said his father. "I've an idea you'll behave yourself from now on."

"Oh, I shall, sir! Have to. Going to settle down. Going to get married, sir, you see."

His father stared.

"That's no news," he said. "Unless—Mary coming back soon?"

Sally jumped. Mary! Peter caught her arm.

"Oh, that's all off, sir!" he said. "Mary and I—well, that's been all wet. That's why she's been staying abroad, just to avoid me. And—and—well, there's Sally, you see, and——"

He turned to Sally.

"That was the catch, you see," he said breathlessly. "That was why I laughed

about your being engaged. Dad and Mary's dad had got us two kids engaged. Neither of us liked it. So you and I, Sally, couldn't be engaged until Mary answered my cable and broke it off—don't you see? And she did—that's the cable I was waiting for——"

Mr. Armstrong was making strange noises. Peter shook his head. Queer, he seemed to feel, how obtuse otherwise intelligent people were about some things.

"Simple enough!" he said. "Just took a little concentration. Got to keep your eye on the ball, that's all."

THE END.



TIME AND TIED.

FOWL LUCK

by
J. F. Morton Howard

*FUN-damentally
good!*



*Illustrated by
Marg*

IT had been my turn that morning to call for our letters at the post-office. There was only one, and that was for Henry. Returning to the small cottage by the river

where Henry and Peter and I were taking an early fishing holiday on our own, I flicked Henry's single miserable missive to him, and told him it wasn't worth the journey.

"Well, I jolly well reckon it is!" declared Henry, pouncing on his letter: "Why, it's from Miss Gorton! They've accepted! They've accepted!" he carolled blithely. "They're coming to-day! They'll be here in time for lunch!"

"Mr. and Mrs. Gorton?" I asked.

"And Angela!" added Henry raptly.

Peter and I nodded sagely at each other. We had long suspected how it was with Henry.

"When did you invite them down?" I inquired.

"Well, I've written to—er—one or the other of them about every other day the whole fortnight we've been here," replied Henry, "begging them to run down and see us. And now she—I mean, they—they're coming to-day!"

"Well, what are we going to give them for lunch?" Peter wanted to know.

"Time's too short for anything in the way of a really posh meal," I pointed out. "Better open an extra tin of bully beef and another tin of pineapple chunks, and let it go at that, I suppose."

"Do you seriously suggest," witheringly demanded Henry, "that we should offer an ethereal creature like Miss Gorton bully beef and tinned pineapple?"

"Well, then," put forward Peter, "what about sardines?"

"Do your united imaginations soar no higher than things in tins?" asked Henry, loftily.

"Oh, well, of course there are eggs," said Peter brightly. "If you think Miss Gorton would like a few fried eggs and a rasher of bacon or two——"

"Shut up!" shouted Henry. "It's sheer profanity to couple mention of a divine girl like Miss Gorton with—ugh!—eggs and bacon!"

"Well," observed Peter, "as we don't happen to have any ambrosial nectar or candied rose-petals or angel-cake in the larder at the moment, I'd like to know what we can offer them for lunch?"

"You can leave it to me," asserted Henry. "I'll step up into the village and see what I can find worth having for lunch."

He was absent for nearly an hour. When he returned he was dangling a defunct hen.

"Roast chicken for dinner, boys!" he proclaimed proudly. "Sheer inspiration! Caught sight of this blighter, and bought it and had it slain straightway! Not every camp that can give its visitors roast chicken for lunch, eh?"

And he put down the dead hen, and stood beside it with his arms folded as if he were being photographed for a "My Greatest Deed" series.

Peter was the first to turn on the cold-water tap.

"My dear Mr. Baxter," he very politely addressed Henry, "do you really imagine that that bird can be cooked for to-day's lunch?"

"Don't you know that poultry has to hang for a bit before it's ready for cooking?" I asked. "If we cook that bird to-day, it'll be as tough as indiarubber."

"Oh, don't be so jolly domesticated!" begged Henry pettishly. "Besides, I don't believe it. The old girl assured me that it was quite young, and would be as tender as tender."

"Also, my dear Mr. Baxter," continued Peter, "may I point out that your purchase has still to be plucked, and that will take some little while."

"Oh, pooh, as if we couldn't flip the feathers off a fowl in three minutes between us."

"And how do you intend to cook the bird?" I asked.

"Why, roast it, of course," said Henry. "One always roasts chickens, doesn't one?"

"But, you priceless cuckoo," remarked Peter, "we haven't got an oven—not one that works. The kitchen range here is prehistoric."

"I never thought of that!" admitted Henry. "Oh, well, we'll boil the blessed bird!"

"Our saucepan is much too small" I pointed out.

"Very well, then, we'll grill it!" snapped Henry. "I decline to offer anything fried to Miss Gorton, at all events. And I do wish

you fellows wouldn't keep raising objections!" he protested. "I think it's most discouraging of you. However, I've done my part, thank goodness, and now it's up to you two fellows!"

"What?" chorussed Peter and I.

"Well, I've, as it were, designed the menu and carried it all the way home," contended Henry. "Surely it's your turn to take over now. You've only got to get it plucked and cooked, and there you are!"

"And what about you?" I asked.

"Oh, I'm afraid I shall be a bit too busy to give any further help," said Henry off-handedly. "By the time I've had a really good shave and changed, it will be quite time for me to go off in the boat and meet the Gortons."

"That isn't coming off!" firmly asserted Peter. "You brought the blessed fowl on your own responsibility, and you've got to cook it!"

"But I've got to go and meet——"

"That's all right!" said Peter. "I know Pa Gorton and Mrs. Gorton even better than you do. I'll go and meet them."

"Dashed if you do!" objected Henry.

"Oh, very well, if you particularly want to offer Miss Gorton fried eggs and bully-beef and sardines for her lunch——"

Well, in the end Henry very reluctantly agreed to remain in the cottage to prepare the fowl for lunch. But it took a lot of argument.

So Peter began to get himself ready, and Henry and I started to pluck the fowl.

I should never have believed there could be so many feathers on a bird. Within three minutes feathers were positively clogging the air.

"Tell you what, old man," said Henry. "This is going to be a long job, pulling those darn feathers off by hand. Why not burn 'em off? I'm sure I've read somewhere about fowls being singed."

It seemed to me that this was a good idea. So Henry lighted the patent oil-stove and we singed the fowl pretty thoroughly.

The experiment was not a complete success. Apart from the awful aroma, the result of our efforts with the oil-stove was to give the fowl

a good deal of the aspect of a charred hedge hog.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Henry, slapping his knee. "I've just thought of something! I remember reading the other day that an awfully good way to cook a bird is to bury it underground. I mean, you dig a hole and shove the bird in, feathers and all, and then you fill in the hole and light a fire on top. And then, when you dig up the bird again, it comes out perfectly cooked, and the feathers and the skin just peel right off!"

"Good enough!" quoth I, and fetched a spade.

Henry was fearfully hucked at having recollected such a topping way to cook fowls.

"It'll do me a bit of good with Miss Gorton," he told me confidently. "She'll see how domesticated I really am, and how I can be depended upon in an emergency, and all that sort of thing."

So he went into the small garden and gleefully shovelled out a hole for the hen, and buried it, and we lighted a fire of paper and twigs and rubbish on top.

Peter was ready to start off in the boat by then.

"Tell Miss Gorton that I'm hoping she'll enjoy chicken for lunch," instructed Henry. "Don't say any more. Just let it sound mysterious and intriguing and all that."

Peter went off and Henry and I eased about for a while.

"I wonder how that fowl is getting on," mused Henry at length. "I mean, there's no chance of it being cremated right away to ashes, is there? Or perhaps the fire isn't big enough and the bird will be half-raw. I'd just hate to offer that girl raw fowl for her lunch, and I'd hate just as much to offer her a plate of cinders. Dash it all, I'm not going to risk it. I'm going to have a look!"

So he got the spade and cleared away the fire. Then he prepared to exhumate the bird.

It was a pity that in his nervousness he used the spade so vigorously. At the very first thrust of the spade it plunged clean into the earth.

I looked aghast at Henry. Henry groaned dismally.

He had thrust his spade clean through the centre of our projected lunch.

We brought the melancholy remains to the light of day, but we reburied them at once.

"Where's the tin-opener?" I murmured.

"Never!" exclaimed Henry. "I sent her a message to the effect that there was chicken for lunch, and she'll think I was only leg-pulling if we trot out bully-beef and tinned fruit! I should hate her to think that I could be guilty of a soulless, idiotic joke like that!"

"Well, what are you going to do?"

"Have another look round the village!" asserted Henry firmly. "If there's a cooked chicken to be had anywhere within the five mile radius I'm going to get it, if it costs me five pounds or five years!"

Again Henry sallied resolutely forth.

He was back quite soon this time. He positively galloped back, and he was looking strangely excited. He had removed his coat and was carrying it in a bundle under his arm.

"Oh I *do* believe in fairies!" he declared ecstatically.

"Why, what's happened?" I asked.

"I've managed to steal a cooked fowl!" explained Henry, with pride. "In the Bull and Crown, it was. You see, I went along there to see if old Jephson, the landlord, could do anything for us in the matter. I knew it was no good asking Mrs. Jephson, because somehow she doesn't like me one little bit. But when I got there old Jephson had gone out for the day. So I had to ask Mrs. Jephson if she'd got such a thing as a cooked fowl knocking about the place. I told her how badly we wanted one. She seemed very

pleased to learn that I was badly in need of anything."

"What happened?"

"She said she did happen to have a roast fowl in the place. She had just finished cooking it for a couple of chaps who are going back there to lunch. I asked her to sell me the fowl, but she only laughed. She wouldn't sell it to me at any price!"

"Well, then, how did you get it?"



"Well, I was already coming away when some instinct—I think my guardian angel must have put it into my head—prompted me to turn back and have another shot to get that bird. But this time I went round to the back of the place. I guessed she'd be in the kitchen, and it's a longish way from the kitchen to the bar, and you know how women hate being called away from their work."

"So you went to the back door?"

"I did. I knocked. No answer. I peeped into the scullery. No one there except

that deaf old servant woman. Then I spotted the fowl on a dish. Been put there to get cold in time for lunch, I daresay. Well, I simply swooped. In one half-second I had my blazer off, and in another I had the fowl well and truly wrapped up in it. Then I sprinted like billy-o, and here I am!" he vaunted. "And here's roast fowl for lunch, after all!"

"Jolly risky!" I commented.

"Pooh! That'll be all right! Old Jephson

to get busy again. Look who's coming along the bank!"

Henry looked.

"Gosh!" he said, in blank dismay.

Hurriedly Henry deposited his coat-wrapped plunder within the cottage. Then, with pitiful attempts at unconcern, we turned to greet the local policeman.

"My word, you got a good few feathers blowing about 'ere," he observed, quite genially. "Mrs. Jephson was saying something to me about just 'aving 'ad a fowl stole, but I shouldn't think, from all these feathers, as you gents is short enough of fowls to 'ave to steal one. I reckon it was a cat, and so I told 'er!"

The policeman sat down and filled his pipe. We sat down beside him. The policeman had his dog with him, and we made a fearful lot of fuss of the dog. Somehow we felt it would do us no harm to keep on the right side of the policeman.

"No; I reckon it was a cat, right enough, as 'ad Mrs. Jephson's

fowl," declared the constable presently.

"We haven't had a fowl in the cottage all the time we've been here," stated Henry, quite priggishly. "So Mrs. Jephson wouldn't find her bird here, anyway."

"But I thought I saw you carrying a fowl this mornin'," mentioned our visitor.

"That?" said Henry. "Oh, yes, that?



"I swooped up the fowl and wrapped it in my blazer."

and I are great pals, and I'll explain to him some time, and square up for the bird, and he'll see that the whole thing blows over."

"I think you said your guardian angel interested itself in procuring that fowl for you?" I remarked. "Well, it seems to me that your guardian angel had better prepare

Oh, we—we buried that, of course. It's—it's a new way," he hastened to add, in response to the constable's surprised stare, "a new way of—of keeping them from getting high."

"Ah, yes," said the constable easily. "Lots of new-fangled ideas about uow. Don't know as they're any better than the old ones, though, when all's said and done."

He proceeded to develop a discussion on the subject of new ideas and old. In the middle of his talk his dog got up and wandered away.

I was pretending an extraordinary interest in the constable's theory when presently I caught a glimpse of the dog through the cottage door. It was eagerly nosing Henry's coat.

Henry and I exchanged agonised glances. Fortunately, the policeman's back was towards the cottage.

I got up to drive the dog out, but I sat down again. I had a vision of the dog rushing out with Mrs. Jephson's fowl in its jaws. And we didn't want that to happen.

Presently we heard ominous crackings.

"Where's that dog o' mine?" said the policeman. "I 'ope 'e ain't up to no mischief."

"He's chewing a branch or something," declared Henry desperately.

"Sounds as if 'e's in your cottage. I'll soon 'ave 'im out! 'E might start eating your food or something."

"No, don't bother!" implored Henry. "He's quite all right where he is. He—he'll keep the rats away!"

"He ain't got no business in a private place," maintained the policeman, and half-turned to call his dog.

"Why, 'e's eating something already!" exclaimed our visitor. "'Ere, Rover!"

"It's—it's quite all right!" averred Henry. "Really it is! He's ouly finishing up some odd

scraps we left about on purpose if he called—I mean, if a dog came."

"Ah, but I don't allow 'im to cat except at proper times," said the policeman, rising. "And if 'e won't come when 'e's called, I must go and fetch 'im out and teach 'im better, that's all!"

He strode towards the cottage.

"Look!" exclaimed Henry wildly, pointing towards a distant hedge. "There's a cat gone along there, and I'll swear it's got something in its mouth. Looked just like a roast fowl to me. Oh, do let's go and see!" he cried, grasping our visitor by one arm and beginning to drag him away.

I grabbed the other arm, and between us we hauled the surprised policeman across to the hedge.

We hunted for some while, but no cat did we espy. When at last we returned cottage-wards, the dog was sitting out on the bank. It had a contented look in its eye.

"Well, time I was getting along," said the policeman. "Come along, Rover. I'll attend to you later on, when we get back to the whip."

He saluted us very amicably and trudged off. Henry and I darted into the cottage. A few splintered bones were all that was left of the roast fowl.

And as Henry tottered out into the open, Peter came sculling round the bend with our guests.

I picked up the tin opener.

A couple of minutes later our guests were with us.

"I got your message, Mr. Baxter," said Miss Gorton brightly. "Do you know, I think you must be an awfully clever man, Mr. Baxter. However did you guess we were bringing along a pair of cold chickens and some other things in the luncheon-basket as a little surprise?"

THE END.

THE OPTIMIST.

At beauty I am not a star.

There are others more handsome by far.

But my face I don't mind it, for I am behind it,

The fellows in front get the jar.

Romance for Rent

(Continued from page 23.)

one of these for an hour or so?" said Chester, in his earnest young way.

"Surely not," said Miss Mooney. "Awfully smart, don't you think? And hardly costs anything to make.

I hope you'll be able to push them; it will be a profitable line. One moment; I'll get you a box."

So, half an hour later, when Chester walked into the cubby-hole where Miss Kenyon had her desk, he was carrying a Geddin hat-box in his hand. He gave her a serious smile and closed the door behind him.

"I have a new hat here," he said, untying the string. "The latest from Paris. And I've brought it over—er—to get your views on it."

From his fifth word, she might have posed for the Spirit of Attention; and by the time he had the box open, she had produced a mirror from the

lower drawer of her desk and had twice rearranged her hair.

"Oh, isn't it cute?" she cried, as Chester lifted the hat from the box.

"No tittle there," he thought, after a moment's hesitation.

She put it on, and did something precious with the bang of her small ear-rings.

"Isn't it a darling?" she exclaimed, then.

"No tittle there," muttered Chester to himself.

"You wouldn't have to tell anybody it's the latest!"

"No tittle there," he muttered again, after a moment's thought.

"It's the queerest thing about styles," she continued. "The moment you put on the new one it makes all the others look old."

"There!" cried Chester to himself, in frowning young



**SHE WAS A JUDGE'S DAUGHTER
AND
OH BOY! HOW SHE TRIED HIM!**

triumph. "It makes all the others look old!"

"I wish I'd been wearing this the other night," she went on, doing various tricks with the mirror, "just to see 'em stare."

Again Chester had an inspiration.

"Are you busy to-night?" he asked.

"No," she said, apparently looking at the back of her head.

"Then could I engage you?"

"Why, I don't mind," she said, and hurried out to show the other girls.

Chester immediately 'phoned Miss Mooney.

"That new hat," he said. "I'm getting opinions on it. Favourable, so far. But do you mind if—er—one of my business associates wears it this evening, so that I may get views in a wider field? Thank you very much, Miss Mooney. Yes, I'll make a complete report."

V.

OLD JOHN liked the millinery circular, too.

"Sounds like good stuff to me," he said, "but the proof of the pudding is whether it sells the goods. We'll try it out, and I'll tell you what I've been thinking. If we get results from the stockings and hats, there may be an opening for you here. A steady job for a year or two would do you good—give you a chance to find your bearings, and all that. Six pounds a week, say, to start. You needn't say anything now, but keep it in the back of your head and think it over."

"Six pounds a week!" scoffed Chester to himself. "When I'll soon be making that much a day!"

"And now, if you want to try another," continued old John, "we've just received a shipment of Cubist dancing-shoes, either for dancing or evening wear. Go up and see Mr. Merry in the shoe department, and tell him I sent you, and why."

"Will he let me take a sample pair?" asked Chester. And, seeing that the older man was beetling his brows at the question, he explained in his serious young way: "Miss Mooney gave me a sample hat, and I

think I told you that a young lady helped me with the stockings—at so much for the evening, you understand. Well, she helped me with the hat, too. I paid her for wearing it last night, and this circular is based upon her own reactions, and also upon the reactions which we received from other women when they looked at it. So I thought now, if I could arrange for her to wear a pair of these new shoes——"

Old John exclaimed "Sssrrrtrumph!" again, preparatory to blowing his nose. "I see I'll have to be careful what lines I give you," he added. "Lucky we're not selling diamonds or motor-cars. All right, I'll 'phone Mr. Merry, but you'd better get her right size."

They were charming little shoes of mosaic leather work, each tiny piece of leather a different pastel shade, and these pieces sewed together as though by a graduate artist in patch-work quilts. A Cubist design, as Chester had been told; and when you hear that the colours were lilac and pink and rose and grey, and here and there a bold bit of purple and black, you will understand how gladly he 'phoned Miss Kenyon and asked her the size of her shoes.

"Twos," she answered, in a voice of slight wonder.

He told her why he had asked her, but she didn't seem to be particularly enthusiastic.

"And can I engage you for this evening?" he asked.

"I'm afraid not—this evening," she said.

"Why not?" he asked.

She chided him by a short pause and then answered:

"I have another engagement."

"To-morrow evening then?" he asked.

This time her pause was somewhat longer.

"I think you'd better call up to-morrow," she said. "I may be too tired."

He took the shoes—twos, an unusually pretty pair—and when he left the store, he stood in the entrance for nearly a minute with the package under his arm.

"I know what I'll do," he suddenly told himself. "I'll go and show 'em to her,

I may get an idea for a title—if nothing else.” If you had been there when he walked into Miss Kenyon’s caddy-hole ten minutes later, it might have occurred to you that she looked up at him with an indifferent eye: but that when he opened his package, her glance not only brightened, but her mouth seemed to water as well.

“Aren’t they beauties!” she exclaimed.

“I wish you’d break that other engagement and wear them to-night,” said Chester earnestly.

“I can’t,” she said. “You know—it’s funny in a way. While I’ve been helping you get ideas, you gave me an awfully good one. Mr. Smollet saw us out together the other evening—I do a lot of work for him—and when he began teasing me, I told him I was only hired for the evening—that everything was strictly business.

So he’s engaged me for this evening, and he says he can get me a lot of business. I’ve

been talking to some of the other girls, and they’re quite keen for it, too. So if you find me missing here some day, you’ll know I’ve started an agency of my own. Why not?”

Chester didn’t think much of it.

“Who’s Mr. Smollet?” he asked. “Do you know him well enough?”

“I knew him long before I knew you.” She smiled. “He’s in the estate business—awfully clever—and makes a lot of money.”

“But you can give me to-morrow night,” said Chester.

“I’d rather not promise.” She hesitated. “I don’t know yet how long I shall be up to-night. But if you’ll call me to-morrow—And I think you’d better take these heavenly slippers,” she added with something



Lady: “Excuse me, conductor, but do you pass the Grand Theatre?”

Conductor: “Yes, mam.”

Lady: “Then perhaps you could tell me the programme that will be there this evening?”

like a sigh, "or I might be tempted to wear them."

"Oh, well," frowned Chester, leaving the building a few minutes later with his package under his arm, "I'll be able to do a good night's work this evening——"

But though he sat up in his boarding-house room till after twelve—one heavenly slipper on each side of his ink-hottle—the net results of his work were four heavily corrected sheets of copy paper—four sheets of paper which he sourly tore up the following morning after reading them.

"I'll have Miss Kenyon write a few letters for me," he told himself, wrapping up the slippers. "I've been neglecting my correspondence too much lately."

So at half-past nine he walked into her cubicle with his package again under his arm, and found her just taking her hat off. Of course it might have been imagination, but it seemed to Chester that she looked different—that there was more colour in her cheeks, more vivacity in her manner than he had ever seen before. He was still waiting for her to get her notebook when a long-nosed man with a little black monstache looked in—a long-nosed man with a very able look, even though his smile at that moment might best be described as killing.

"Good-morning, Mr. Smollet," said Miss Kenyon, and handed him a number of letters which she had evidently written the previous afternoon.

"I'll see you again—when you are disengaged," he said, lisping a little.

Chester shut the door as soon as he could, and dictated four letters—the first one frowningly, the next two sadly, and the fourth with a wistful note in his voice.

"And now about this evening?" he asked, reaching for the slippers.

"No, not this evening; to be perfectly frank, I'm much too tired," she told him.

"Then to-morrow evening," said Chester.

"But I'm engaged for to-morrow night."

"With Smollet again?" he asked, returning to his frowns.

"That's not fair," she said, beginning to frown herself. "A lawyer, for instance,

doesn't discuss one client with another. So why should I—with you?"

Chester left a few minutes later, his package still under his arm, his ears almost as red as his hair; and turning at the entrance, perhaps for a last reproachful glance, he saw Smollet eagerly advancing toward Miss Kenyon's door. At this—as the novelists say—the iron entered Chester's soul.

"Oh, well," he thought, "there are plenty of other places where I can have my type-writing done. I shall never come here again!"

But he did. For one thing, you see, he had forgotten those four letters. And for another, he had grown accustomed to Miss Kenyon and the efficient manner in which she took his dictation. And, after all, their relationship had only been based upon the strictest business principles. She had a perfect right to go out with Smollet or anyone else she chose.

"I'm awfully pleased to hear you say that," she said to Chester, "because, you know, I was beginning to think you were unfair."

"And when can you give me another evening?" he asked.

She gave him the next Wednesday—and the next—until at last he had four Wednesday evenings in a row—and always when he took her home he reached in his pocket for the envelope which he had placed there, and solemnly handed over her fee. On the last of these meetings they had dined at the Rochambeau Roof, and while they were exercising in their first dance, Chester noticed that Miss Kenyon was looking carefully around among the tables.

"I know," he said—though he didn't know how his lip was curling—"this is where Smollet saw us; the first time we went out together. You're wondering if he's here to-night."

"You know that isn't nice," she said.

"It may not be nice," he told her, in low voice, you understand, because of the others who were taking exercise around them, "but I think somebody ought to talk to you about Smollet. Personally, I don't think he's to be trusted."

"I do," she said. "And so would you, if I told you something."

"Tell me, then," he challenged her. "I hate to misjudge people."

She looked up at him, her eyelashes never seeming so long, nor the cleft in her chin so deep.

"He wants me to marry him," she said, and gently lowered her head again.

Chester probably swallowed harder than he had ever swallowed before in his life.

"Are you going to?" he asked, when he had finally brought his Adam's apple to rest.

"You know what I told you once," she reminded him.

"Good for you!" he exclaimed, and put so much pep in his dancing that they bumped three couples in quick succession.

"Do you call that strictly business?" she asked, raising her eyes again.

It wasn't, of course. But neither was the evening—heing one of those balmy May nights when plum trees are in blossom and a wise old maid will shut her ears if she hears the "Blue Danube." Chester had meant to take Miss Kenyon to a show: but somehow, when they descended from the Rochambeau Roof, they took a bus instead and continued their exercise by a walk in Hyde Park. About them was the subdued purr of the city at play; and all around were other couples, either seated on benches or strolling side by side. Here and there the grass had been cut that day—its fragrance as sweet as the song of any birds.

"How are your circulars for Gedding's going on?" she asked him once.

"The stockings and millinery are doing well," he said. "I think we'll pay for those. But the shoe circular—Mr. Gedding didn't like it."

He didn't add, and she didn't remind him, that in his pique against Smollet he had written the shoe circular without any help from her. But he thought of it.

And still they moved slowly along among those other couples—some of them drifting along together in silence like figures dimly seen in dreams.

"I don't know——" Chester found himself

thinking. "I guess they're more important than I thought." Turning this reflection over, the words of old John arose in his mind. "In our business, you know, we must understand the ladies, or we wouldn't be able to please them."

When he gave Miss Kenyon her fee that night, he sighed to himself and walked slowly to his hoarding-house.

"Like a cross-word puzzle—maybe——" he found himself thinking again. "You can't solve it just by looking and wondering, no matter how close it is. You—you've got to get pencil and paper and—and get right down to work."

VI.

THE next day Miss Kenyon wasn't at the office. The day after that Chester was informed she had a cold. And on the third day they told him that her cold was threatening to turn into pneumonia.

"Poor girl, she isn't as strong as she looks," said Miss Gluck. "I'm going over to see her this afternoon."

Chester didn't wait till afternoon. He paused long enough to get a dozen scarlet roses, and then he hurried to the flats where she lived—a queer smarting in his nose, a funny aching in his throat as though he, too, was sickening for something. Arriving at her address and sending up his name, he was presently admitted by a pleasant-faced matron, who smiled as though she had heard of him more than once, and a few minutes later he was shown into Miss Kenyon's room.

It was a charming room. Indeed, for that matter, the whole flat had secretly impressed Chester. In this room in which he now found himself for instance, the walls were covered by Japanese paper, the floor with a silky rug. By the window was a desk, and over the desk a time-mellowed painting of a red-faced old boy, with a white starched choker around his neck. The furniture was walnut, the counterpane embroidered silk, and from under this counterpane a long-eyelashed young lady smiled up at Chester and welcomed him in a hoarse whisper.

"I can't talk out loud," she told him

"I always get this silly laryngitis when I have a cold."

Her mother came in with the roses then—roses which were greeted with a hoarse cry of rapture.

"They're Fanny's favourite flowers," said Mrs. Kenyon. "You couldn't have brought her anything to please her more."

Chester stopped about ten minutes; and when he arose to go, Fanny hoarsely whispered, "Wait a minute," and reaching into a drawer of a table by the side of her bed, she brought out an envelope and handed it to him.

"What's this?" asked Chester, beginning to feel warm.

"Your fee," she told him with a hoarse young hark of satisfaction.

"My what?"

"Your fee!" she crowed. "Your six-and-eightpence for coming. Everything strictly business—the way we agreed."

"I don't want your six-and-eightpence," he told her, wiping his forehead.

"But you've got to take it," she firmly barked. "I always took it. And if you don't take it, you can't come again."

So Chester took it, and the next day he took his second fee—his ears playing their old trick of trying to match his hair—but on his third visit he couldn't go into the bedroom, but stayed in the living-room, and once when Mrs. Kenyon came out for a minute, and he saw she was crying. Chester nearly wept with her—

and later peeled potatoes for the nurse's dinner.

By Sunday, though, he had the entrée of the bedroom again. Fanny's eyelashes were as long as ever, and the cleft in her chin was as deep, but it only needed a glance to see how near she had been to solving a certain great mystery.

"I think there's one more fee in the drawer," she said at once.

"I don't want any more fees," he gently scoffed; "I want you."

"You mean—to fire me again?"

"No; I mean to own you for good."

Somehow, by that time, he was kneeling by the side of the bed, her hand in his.

"Mr. Gedding offered me six pounds a week and a steady job the other day," he said. "Do you think we could get along on that?"

She nodded with a far-away smile—the smile of those who are happy in their dreams—and then she laughed.

"Do you remember that first night you hired me?" she asked. "And I said love was a trap and a sickness—and you said women were germs—and took all a man's time and money?"

Chester snorted.

"I guess we were younger then," he said. "Folk have to live and learn." And dismissing these juvenile errors with a wave of his hand, he continued in a more serious tone, "I'll bring those Cubist shoes around to-morrow. An extra fifteen pounds would come in handy now."

THE END.



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Merry Mag. Mixture

Asking For It

She: "Stop! My lips are for another."

He: "All right, you'll get another after I've given you the first one."

Difference

Mistress: "Mary, do you ever sweep under the bed?"

Mary: "Yes, mum. I sweep everything under the bed."

Granted

"I do want to sing so badly."

"Then your wish has been gratified."

H.P.

"Look, there goes Minnie. I hear she is buying her new dress by instalments."

"Really! And is that the first instalment she is wearing?"

Colour Line

Young Thing: "I want some nice grapes for an invalid."

Greengrocer: "Black or white, madam?"

Young Thing: "Oh, he's white, of course."

This Love Game

Judge: "And what is the charge?"

Lawyer: "Driving while in a state of extreme infatuation."

Take All

Mistress of the House: "I'd be ashamed to be a great big strong man like you, and have to go round asking for money."

Tramp: "So I am, ma'am; but I once got three months for taking it without asking."

A Likely Place

"How ever did you come to get your hands covered in syrup, Jackie?"

"I've been looking for the ring you lost, mummy."

"And where did you find it?"

"In the syrup tin."

Which?

"I hear that Joan has started reducing."

"Smoking or drinking?"

A Little Extra

Kind Old Lady: "And is this all you do for a living, my man?"

Pavement artist: "Lor' lumme! What do you expect me to do, stand on me head or somethink?"

A Living Wonder

"Do you know that a man dies in London every minute?"

"Wonderful! I'd like to meet him!"

Kept Things Going

"What are the morals of this village?"

"Excellent. So good, in fact, that several of our weekly sewing parties have failed for want of scandal."

The Mistress

Mr. Robinson: "Well, there's no doubt about who is the boss in our house."

Mrs. Smith: "So you finally got a cook, did you?"

On The Rocks

"I say, did you know Bob was married?"

"Heavens, no! I didn't even know he was broke!"



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